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GRACE SUFFICIENT.

GRACE SUFFICIENT,

BY

HENRY ROISSY.

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." —Col. i., 11.



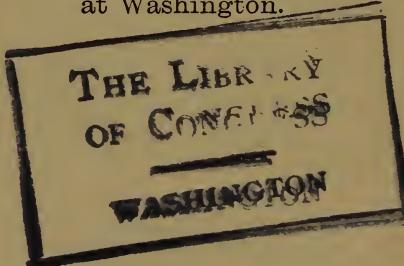
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PREFACE.

When we consider the number of books already before the public, so well calculated to lead men away from sinfulness into the peaceful walks of practical Christianity,—books written by those whose calling has been the study of Christian experience, having viewed it in all its different phases, and whose scholarship and piety have amply qualified them for the great and good work to which they have dedicated hearts and hands, it might almost appear unnecessary to multiply words on this sacred theme; yet it has pleased God, in His love and wisdom, to train me in a school differing in some respects from those in which men usually acquire preparation to meet the smile or frown of the world, and in this training-school I have learned some lessons which cannot fail to prove of lasting benefit to me. All things connected with God's dealings toward me have served to impress the conviction that He is *love*; that while we may be insignificant, God is almighty; that though we are weak, at best, and liable to err, He makes no mistakes; and in Him is found such sufficiency of grace and power, that when even those who are "less than the least of all saints" become so related to Him that the heritage of faith is actually conferred, a shelter is raised for them amid the attacks of Satan and his allies, which none of the enemies of truth can remove; and at all times, in all places, and under circumstances of every description, the soul finds a satisfying portion.

I would not keep these lessons wholly to myself, for possibly there are others to whom one suggestive word may prove a blessing: souls who are praying, hoping, yearning for a surer rest than they have known; calling for help as I also called so long. Now, if at last the veil of doubt or fear or mystery is withdrawn, so that I am enabled to walk with delight where once I stumbled, recognizing the hand of God, and proving His faithfulness to shelter and defend, where formerly I knew only the distress of uncertainty, shall my whole duty have been performed if this experience is smothered within my heart, or this light kept under a bushel? I desire to run no risks; though the light may not be a great one, for the glory of the Master I shall let it "shine," for this is His command.

To such as may be critically disposed, I have but a word to say. But one object is before me; that is the conversion of the unawakened, and the comfort and profit of believers: and if, with this object in view, anything shall be written which is offensive to the classic taste, let me ask such patient forbearance as your kindness will allow. Some statements may be made which fail to convey the truth as clearly as they should. May God forbid the infliction even of the slightest injury as the result of one misspoken word. Let me now ask the prayers of my readers, that the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, may attend this effort to glorify His name.

H. R.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Can we enter more becomingly upon the consideration of the following chapters, dear reader, or form an acquaintance more liable to prove of mutual benefit, than by together looking to God in prayer that His blessed Holy Spirit may be given unto us, and that grace, sufficient as it is for all phases of human existence, may assist us in the impartial performance of duty wherever we may be this day? Doubtless you can already testify of His abiding presence, for you have sought and found the pearl of great price, which to you is more than the wealth of worlds; a supply in every time of want, a comfort amid hours of perplexity, and a joy when the avenues of earthly pleasure have been closed against you. Then have we still greater reason to unite our prayers, for the consolation is appreciated, not alone by one, but both of us; and we shall all the more cheerfully enter into the spirit of devotion.

How happy the thought, that though strangers, we may be one in purpose and desire at the throne of grace. I should prefer to meet you there than anywhere else; for feelings, uncomfortable, if nothing worse than that, which might possibly exist as the result of differences in opinion, are harmonized as we bow in prayer. No unkind thought or damaging prejudice may be entertained as we speak the words "our Father." No Pharisaic feeling of superiority can abide with its corrupting influence, when we come into the presence of Him who "knoweth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men." We meet on a common level here, children of the same loving Parent, differing in denominational persuasion, possibly, but both children of Him whose condescending goodness extends to our race the privilege of becoming sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

Most thoroughly do I believe in prayer; for not only as I read the Sacred Word, which teaches us that "men ought always to pray and not to faint," but as I look within, where memory refers me, first, to many wonderful deliverances in times of trouble, when it seemed

that no existing power could relieve, and then to the hour when the peace of God, passing understanding, came as a flood of light into my astonished soul, weary as it was from battling with its enemy, who Apollyon-like, determined to accomplish my overthrow, there is no room left for doubt, but a long halleluiah rises from my heart to Him who has brought me "out of darkness into His marvelous light."

We should be much in prayer, for no greater source of power is known than this. We should ever live in the spirit by which it becomes natural and easy to pray without wearying, though it be not in audible words, and commune with God during hours which otherwise were laden with a weight of grief, or loneliness, or woe; looking unto Jesus while many are brooding over sorrows or disappointments of the past, which but lengthens their shadow until it darkens the present day. He, only, who has actually made the trial, understands the wonderful power of prayer: how the soul is disburdened, and how the future is encircled with a halo of light in answer to prayer !

One of the most fruitful causes of indefinite experience in the Christian church to-day, is

that communion with God has come to be regarded as a matter of convenience, more than of positive necessity. Many pray but little, yet wonder why they fail to grow. But this is a duty which cannot suffer neglect without producing results of proportionate detriment to our souls' interest. Engaged though we may be in the performance of life's secular duties, which demand so much time and energy, we cannot afford to neglect this imperative duty, for our spiritual growth is vitally connected with this source of power. The soul becomes feeble in the hour of temptation, desires for holiness of life lose the intensity which characterizes the experience of him who walks hourly with God, and the world, with its distracting influences, withers and disables the heart when prayer is neglected.

Through fervent prayer the Christian receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit in all its fulness. Social meetings and the more public worship should be faithfully observed, still they are not to be regarded as substitutes for special communion with God. It is while thus engaged that "heaven comes down the soul to greet," and the Christian is raised so far above

the perplexities and grievances of life in his connection with the things of time that they are bereft of power to disturb; and Christ, in all His loveliness, comes to be his joy and strength.

Now we need these baptisms of power often, for without them it is impossible to flourish. As in nature, suffering and death are the invariable results of long-continued drought, and the withering foliage, blighted cornfields, and empty granaries, declare the destruction which rain long withheld has caused, so, where the refreshing showers of divine grace cease to bathe the soul, a similar result may always be observed. I distinctly remember the suffering occasioned for want of rain in the community where I lived a few years since. The fields were parched, the grass was burned to its very roots, leaving no indication of remaining life. A beautiful grove just opposite my window was the special object of my observation. The leaves scattered before the scorching winds of July as though terrified at the approach of some foreign destroyer; and ere the summer months had flown, that grove was shorn of its beauty, and stood as in all the nakedness and desolation of November.

And I have known Christians to become the subjects of similar change. They have faded; the freshness and beauty which rendered their early experience so hopeful, giving promise of abundant fruitage, are things of the past; there seems to be little beauty or vigor remaining; and I have asked, What is the cause of this melancholy change while the promises of God are so numerous and well adapted to every case of human want or suffering?

Could it have been trouble that overwhelmed them? I judge not, because a promise of deliverance is given for the day of trouble.* Was it that the lot in which Providence placed them proved to be so much more distressing than that of others? Granting this to be true, even in that case God's grace might have been sufficient. But it was nothing of this kind. Could you have seen more of their unrevealed lives, you would have discovered that much unfaithfulness in watching unto prayer had been the cause of their decline. Oh, I affirm, with God's word as my ground for confidence, that no visitation of suffering or trial need prove disastrous to our spiritual wel-

*Ps. 1., 15.

fare, but instead of that, if accepted in the proper spirit, all shall contribute toward promoting the sublime consummation desired by the true children of God's love; for "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

But if we are to live on this spiritual plane, we shall have need of a clear and positive experience in the things of God; more so, no doubt, than is commonly known among Christians; it is so easy to permit the usual disturbances of life to frustrate the purposes of God in us. The question now is, How are we to become the possessors of this positive experience, this "wisdom that cometh from above"? and the answer, echoing down the ages from the sacred lips of Christ, and of His disciples, chosen and ordained to declare His righteous counsel, is, *ask for it!* "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

With the Bible abounding in such promises as these, who need remain satisfied with a Christian experience so weakly and uncertain that it threatens each day to sink into its grave? Better things are provided for the asking, and God is faithful, who will "stablish, strengthen, settle you," if with a firm purpose to do right, and to be true, you "continue instant in prayer." Under all conceivable circumstances it is necessary to maintain a prayerful disposition. As some one has expressed it, the favors with which you are blessed furnish no excuse for neglect; there is danger that your heart's affections center upon the things of earth; and the stormy course of trial is scarcely less dangerous, for the grim skeleton of despair awaits to seize his prey; so that in every case our only safety lies in looking unto God.

We exist, independent of our own volition, and may become the subjects of trial which challenges our fortitude; and all that is left for us to do is to face this trial, whether we choose to or not, whether we are prepared or unprepared to meet it. Now, if by some act of faith we may become so related to the Divine that

His strength shall ever substitute our weakness, and, virtually, become our own, abiding with us, keeping us hour by hour, and empowering us to overcome such grievances as often crush beyond recovery the unbeliever, and menace him with despair, what wonderful results shall we behold! We shall become mightier with every on-coming storm, gaze with fearless confidence at its approach, and smile at its baffled rage when it has swept us by.

There are thousands of God's own children to-day, whose countenances tell of an inward tranquillity which will abide forevermore; children who have "come up through great tribulation," and who, had it not been for unshaken confidence in God, and uninterrupted faithfulness in prayer, would long ere this have fallen by death or met a fate still worse, in becoming the subjects of mental derangement. But they are mightier now than ever; their testimony to God's all-sufficient grace has a ring to it which renders it a power wherever it is heard; their lives, so rounded and symmetrical, having had the sharp angles of worldliness and inexperience cut away, speak still more convincingly than their tongues. They are ready to

live, they are prepared to die ; and hold themselves in constant willingness for either life or death ; They are “in a strait betwixt two,” though “having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ.”

Should we fear any earthly woe, while God is ever reminding us that His “grace is sufficient ?” or should we be unduly concerned as to what trials may overtake us ? Rather we should be content with such positions as God appoints for us, and accept them gratefully, rejoicing, meanwhile, in the privilege of *suffering*, if need be, as well as *performing* His sweet will.

Could we for a moment bridge the intervening years of labor and cross-bearing, welcome the time of our departure from these tenements of clay, and be made conscious of our souls’ upward flight to glory, with Jesus and the angels coming to welcome us home, could we listen to the chorus of the redeemed host, chanting our reception as they sing that through great tribulation we had come up, having “washed our robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb,” and then resume life’s duties, time would not be wasted in

gazing upon present afflictions, until they become so magnified as to rise like mountains before us, and exclude the richest blessings from our vision.

This little life affords no waste time in our preparation for the life to come. When our most faithful diligence has been employed in the cheerful performance of duty, no margin remains for murmuring. We should never, never murmur, for it would be an unspeakable calamity if we should at last awaken to the fact that all our lives long we had been chafing against the providence of God, who, in His kindness, had only permitted that which, if accepted in the proper spirit, would have led us out into larger life and opportunity. Since, in God's wisdom, the greatest spiritual victories are often won while prayerfully enduring tribulation, let us not shrink from any ordeal His love provides, but cheerfully step to the front and meet it like men and women.

We may derive no special comfort from being overtaken in the summer's shower, as it descends without warning or apology, drenching us through and through; but when the clouds have parted, and vanished from the

heavens, when the thirsty land has quaffed the refreshing rain, and yielded its thank-offering in countless buds, and leaves, and blossoms, we forget the drenching, and blend our praise-songs with those of nature to Him who doeth all things well. It is thus in God's dealings with His children. He seeks their lasting good rather than their present comfort; and when both cannot be made compatible with His will, it becomes necessary that a sacrifice be made, either of one or the other, and as God is all-wise, ever doing what is best, the least He can deny is the comfort of this brief day.

How few among the Bible saints rose to the zenith of their spiritual strength, thus to bless a world by their example, without experimental knowledge of trial, real and severe! Would God thus have dealt with those He loved, unless it had been necessary, and to answer the wisest purpose? Could He have subjected Abraham to the heart-rending sorrow of preparing for the sacrifice of Isaac, if a milder test of faith would have been as well for him, and for the world to follow? Would it not have been easy for God so to have over-

ruled, that the trials of Job, Joseph, David, Daniel and Paul might have been less severe ? But these were instruments of God ; men of prayer, whom God could trust, and they required preparation for their life-work.

We, also, in our humbler spheres need preparation. God would use us as well as them ; for we, too, form a part of His great plan ; and since experience convinces us of the existence of more dross than ever self-examination had revealed, yet which must be taken from our natures, let us likewise hold ourselves in readiness for God's purifying process, even though it be a passage through the fiery furnace. God's love can never fail us even there ; and if we may thus best glorify His name, and serve the highest interests of those for whom we live and labor, not only should we be submissive, but recognize with gratitude the pains God takes to make us all His own.

And now, kind reader, as we have together begun this book with prayer, invoking the presence and blessing of the God we love, let us look for His fulfillment of the promise extended to any two who agree upon earth as touching whatever they shall ask. Let us ex-

pect the favor *now*, for it is our privilege, and having obtained it, may we so walk with God that our pathway shall become brighter and brighter "unto the perfect day."

But possibly you who scan these lines are a stranger to the love of God; and though possessing sufficient interest in spiritual things to induce you to peruse a religious book, have never given serious thought to the subject of our consideration, nor dreamed that even for you the truth was written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii., 3.

You have listened to the finest sermons, attended the most thrilling social meetings, but notwithstanding all, you are without hope and "without God in the world." What further can be done? We desire to help you. What words shall we use, what arguments employ, that you may be induced to give this subject your thoughtful attention?

Still looking to the dear Lord for guidance in this matter, praying that some simple thought may find its way to your heart with the message of God's love, we devote our first energy and time in an effort to remove the un-

seen manacles which all these years have been binding you hand and foot, lift the veil which has kept the light and warmth of spiritual life from entering and illuminating your soul, and to awaken you from the slumber, which, if left undisturbed, must terminate in death.

They tell us with dismay, of the Christian's stormy voyage, where trial, cross-bearing and temptation replace the prolonged lethargy of him who has never listened to the voice of God. But should we crave ease, when a little tossing on the billows will make us stronger men? Shall you desire cool and pleasant bowers, where, without an effort, you may fold your arms and sink away into unconsciousness, as though there were nothing more to do, forgetting that evil spirits as well as good are hovering about you, diligent in fulfilling their mission of death, when the *furnace* is the purifying power you most need? No; the ease may be gratifying, the bowers may be beautiful, but you desire to be saved; you have but once to live, a moment of time in which to prepare for eternity. Reason bids you seek the wisest preparation possible, though at the cost of everything you once held dear.

If God sees best to give all things that make life beautiful, they shall be yours. If He well knows that they would draw your thoughts from Him, trust Him in their refusal, for this is no less truly an evidence of His love. But whether they be given or withholden, *seek God Himself* with all the energy at your command! You may live, and even prosper, while many of His *favors* are denied, but you *cannot* live without *God*! Existence is then undeserving of the name, for it is maintained under the divine displeasure, while conscience confirms the testimony that your whole duty is not yet performed. Convinced of this, dear reader, can you protract the delay? “To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

CHAPTER II.

WANT.

Who is able to paint the pictures which force themselves before our vision, at the mere mention of this word? Hungry eyes, and still hungrier mouths, appealing to our hospitality, present their unanswerable arguments, demanding the support which love cannot refuse. Shivering frames, but thinly clad with remnants of what could not shelter from the winter's blast if free from tatters, speak vainly to the unmoved revelers in ease and luxury, telling their pitiful story of privation and distress. Tired feet, from journeys now too long, but not yet half completed, seek rest where only mockery is given, and turn again to tread the dreary paths of hope-deferred. Hollow cheeks there are, white and ghastly, and forms so weak that even the mild breath of June, coming but to imprint the kiss of welcome, and play about these wearied ones as if to cheer their future with the hope which, in this

world, can never be fulfilled, must be restrained by coverlets and blankets, lest its good-natured rudeness prove fatal to them who walk the borders of the grave. And human hearts, conscious of suffering far more acute than can possibly afflict their fleshly tabernacles, call urgently for the relief, which, while withheld, subjects them to such torture that health succumbs, and reason begins to totter, confirming our assertion that this is a world of want.

Can words too forcibly depict the failure, disappointment, captivity and anguish imposed upon humanity by disease, that merciless enemy of the race? It cripples the body, enfeebles the intellect, takes away the opportunity for improvement, binds the hands of those who would minister to the needy, blights the hopes of youth, withers the arm and mocks the worthiest endeavors of the mature. It beclouds life's sunset, which should be clear and serene, with the melancholy shadow of enfeeblement, and only when sanctified by the Almighty can it be of any possible benefit to man.

People of intelligence and means, especially Christians, should ever be known as the avowed opposers of disease. They should labor to re-

sist its first approach ; should fight it to the last ; give it battle to the death ; and strive with all the energy they can command, to annihilate this bold intruder upon their happiness and dignity. It found its birth in sin, and with sin let it be destroyed ; for *in itself* it is a curse, not a blessing ; a foe, not a friend. No man, either saint or sinner (other things being equal), can do as well while burdened with it as he can without it.

Special conditions may indeed be furnished by it for "grace to abound," but grace is not dependent upon physical conditions. A mighty intellect, upheld and sustained by unbounded physical health, and consecrated to God and the good of humanity, can accomplish more for the salvation of the race than one which must constantly be held in check, lest too great exertion prove disastrous and induce an overthrow. Many, we are aware, can testify that it was not until brought low by sickness that they were led to meditate upon eternal interests and seek the God of salvation, and that "before they were afflicted they went astray." But there was no necessity for this straying ; it was not the fault of God, and His grace

might have proved as sufficient to sustain them throughout a lifetime of uninterrupted healthfulness as it has under the actual conditions, had they been obedient to the voice of God.

Perhaps sickness even bequeathed an experience which now enables the once afflicted one to render valuable assistance to others who suffer likewise; but if the monster were driven from the world there would be no demand for such assistance. It is generous and noble to bestow this needed sympathy and labor of love, but better would we all be if, with the equilibrium of sound judgment, which is the result of normal development, we might serve God and humanity in the absence of such physical and mental disturbance as the weaknesses, pains and distortions of disease impose upon the human race. Yet the intruder enters, notwithstanding all that we can do; and for a time at least, we must suffer from its ills, though we battle faithfully against it. Let us rejoice in overcoming grace, while with pain we lament the bitter want of comfort which everywhere appears in the form of sickness, that meets us at every turn.

Aside from loss of health, which holds its rank among the richest blessings of this ma-

terial life (a fortune which the millionaire may covet, while pillow'd helplessly upon his downy couch, and surrounded by every comfort that means, sympathy and love can furnish), few misfortunes are dreaded more thoroughly or universally than the loss of property. Nor is this dread unreasonable, for it is the right of him who labors faithfully to receive the just reward of his endeavor. When God declared that "in the sweat of his face" man "should eat bread," he sanctioned the acquisition of property; not the love of it, but He gave His command that man go forth into the world, and by honorable toil, secure for himself and those depending upon him for support, a fair return for the work bestowed.

Visit, if you please, society's fairest circles, where culture, talent and luxury abound; enter the palaces of lords, and accept from them the most extravagant expressions of favor and good will; extend your search to the mightiest of earth, where the noble and valiant tell of victories won for truth, who spurn dishonor as an unpardonable crime; but you will not discover a more deserving man than is the honest laborer: the man who meets and performs life's

simple duties as they are presented day by day, without a murmur, content with the small gains provided by his diligence, until, by perseverance and economy, he finds himself the possessor, not merely of what is necessary, but many of life's luxuries.

This man appreciates the comforts which accumulate to bless his days. He enjoys them, and it is his privilege, for he has earned them. His rest is sweet, for he knows what labor means. Life is pleasant, for he toils not without an object; and year after year, with a bounding spirit he beholds the happy circle, where innocence, health and beauty, with sparkling eyes, and faces brim-full of sunshine, drive from his heart all sorrow that may have sought and found admittance there. This unbroken circle, as it appears in the persons of these little ones, who still have no further thought than to trust him fully for the supply of every want the father is so glad to satisfy, renders him a happy man, and promotes his success in life.

Now, to have the accumulations of his faithfulness swept away in an hour of time, to be rendered homeless in a day, to have

those willing hands hang powerless to provide, to meet the expectant countenances of those dear ones for whom he would willingly die, if necessary, and who had never in all their days known by experience the meaning of want, as they imploringly ask for bread, is a trial hard to bear. It seems cruel; and who (unacquainted with God's love), could chide the man for wondering at the mysterious providence which had grieved his spirit and shattered his earthly prospects?

Yet how painful is the restraint in which are held the thousand willing hands of those whose highest joy would be to ease the pain, bear the burdens, share the sorrows, and minister to the requirements of the helpless and infirm, but who, to keep the wolf away from their own doors, are compelled to give time, strength and labor in the monotonous struggle for daily bread.

How the thirst for knowledge, which in this world is destined to remain unquenched, must suffer the inflammation always consequent upon following, from necessity, pursuits which are distasteful, while the whole being is consuming with a burning fever, longing to tear

itself away, and drink to its satisfaction of the well of knowledge. There scarcely is anything so exasperating to the ambitious soul, or so difficult to endure without a murmur, as the consciousness that within slumbers the undeveloped power of accomplishing a cherished object, while the opportunity for doing so, being stubbornly withheld, compels him in defeat to abandon his project. Yet this is one of the trials of the poor ; they would rise, but are held in check ; they would benefit the world, but labor under disadvantage ; and while to-day we bless the memories of the great and good, who have arisen from obscurity, there is an unwritten history of talent, genius, and ability, coupled with benevolence, which, but for the chains imposed by poverty, would have lessened immeasurably the sufferings of this world of want. And while this position may possibly be a reminder of dependence (a thought which the affluent are prone to forget), the temptations and sufferings peculiar to poverty are so numerous, that a happy mean may without impropriety be desired.

But why, in portraying the wants of man, do we dwell merely upon those conditions of

bodily suffering, or the estate in which he may be found at any time, forgetting the more imperative demand upon our attention? These things but lightly touch the real man, while from his deeper being comes a cry of torture, the echo of which, upon the world's stony heart, awakens small response, save from the faithful few with whom his heart is twined. It is the cry extorted by throes of pain from the heart, which, in life's springtime, swelled with the hope that has been left partially or wholly unfulfilled. Have you ever known the agonies of thirst? Can you depict the feelings of him who has long been kept from drinking to his satisfaction from the cooling spring, and, after suffering almost beyond endurance, with eyelids reddened, and swollen tongue, is brought where he can feast his eyes upon the laughing water, and listen to its music as it leaps and dashes from the rocky crevice, but is chained at the very point where his most desperate reach just fails of procuring for him what alone can save him from the tortures of a living death? Then may you understand the experience of those whose hopes found birth, but were continually deferred as they peered wistfully into sorrow's blackest

night, still hoping that the day was soon to dawn, till finally, in the dimness, a light appeared, so bright and beautiful, that their assurance of the morning filled their souls with rapture,—but alas! instead of sunlight it was only the vivid flashing of the lightning, rendering the after-darkness more intense, and forboding a still fiercer storm.

The death-angel spared not the little prattler who filled the home with his overflowing merriment, nor the loyal sharer of your joys and sorrows; but though you prayed as you never had prayed before, that your life's joy might be spared to comfort you, it could not be; for a better home awaited those you cherished, and your torn spirit refused proffered cheer, and entered with love's lifeless forms into their graves. Can we too fully appreciate these treasures of to-day, when to-morrow they may have left us? Let us patiently perform the labor, and cheerfully bestow all needed care; for it is only when the echo of the footfall has ceased to be heard, it is after we have listened to the last good-by from the voices which, in this world, shall never more rejoice our spirits, it is when those

lips have imprinted their last kiss, and death has closed those beaming eyes, that we fully know how dear they were to us. We then can scarcely believe that our hope, just beginning as it was, to ripen into realization, is shattered beyond recovery, that we are but turning our feet into unknown paths, where deeper shadows than we had ever known are to exclude from our vision the light we cherished so. We are astonished, we are bewildered, and cannot realize the truth. But *it is so*, and no one can help it: the loved ones are gone, and shall not return. Let the tears flow, let the hearts bleed, but this will not repair the loss. The fate is inevitable.

My friend, you are in this world of want. You never knew the meaning of that term before this sorrow came, but now it meets you everywhere. Your heart has been touched; and life is almost unendurable. Nothing seems able to divert your crushed spirit from the thought of the bereavement. Yet you must live, and endure and face the future, though withered beyond expression. Can any sorrow be compared to this? A wounded spirit, a broken heart? But the world abounds in just such

grief as this! Tell me of some hidden nook, some corner of the earth, where the blest subjects are strangers to this blight of sorrow! I wish to go there and see how people live. We speak with folly, for it does not exist where man is found.

We meet this trial everywhere. We read it on haggard faces moving down the thoroughfare, which brighten for the moment when addressed, as if to deny the truth they fain would conceal. We detect it in the listless movements of stricken ones as they mechanically perform the daily round of duties, tenfold heavier now than when their hopes, radiant and beautiful, gave inspiration for their labor. It betrays its victims within the hallowed sanctuary, where, from a hundred homes, way-wearied, tempest-beaten, hunger-smitten souls assemble, eager to hear God's ambassadors tell of joy and peace and rest, and listen to the soothing strains of melody, which bequeath a thousand comforts to the sorrowing heart.

But why prolong this contemplation? Why dwell upon a theme so familiar to us all? Why open wounds which have commenced to heal? Let this suffice; and let us turn our thoughts to

brighter things. We have been looking at the picture with a dark cloud overshadowing. Let us now turn it to the sunlight, for there is a *bright* side; and we shall see that a supply has been provided for all these earth-wants, which, sooner or later, shall be given, to turn into rejoicing all the sorrows of the faithful. These grievances and heart-wounds, severe though they be while they remain, cannot last always, and are to culminate in everlasting rest; and the blessed hope of immortality, so sure and steadfast, should thrill with a new joy all hearts that fail to find their consolation here. Then how much sweeter will be our peace at the remembrance of faithfulness amid the wildest storms that could afflict us in the world!

Is sickness for a day to be compared with cloudless glory for ten thousand ages? Can homelessness and poverty greatly disturb an heir of God, the God who has given promise of a mansion, arranged by Jesus Christ, His Son, already gone before to "prepare a place" for him, and which but awaits until he has proved faithful just a little longer upon life's stormy pilgrimage? He is but a stranger here at best; the richest palace would not be home

to him, for his heart is with God, and he would desire to depart even though provided with the best that earth can furnish.

And is there great necessity that hearts be deeply torn by death or disappointment, when from above God's voice is calling, "My son, my daughter, 'give me thine heart,'" and in whom dwells the power as it nowhere else exists, to "bind up the broken-hearted?" To dwell with God forever is worthy the sufferings of a thousand years; much more the trial of our fleeting sojourn here; and when the might and grace of this unfailing Friend are given to assist and cheer us, there comes to be a strange exultant triumph connected with the thought of patiently enduring the pain which is then rendered powerless to harm.

What ill can crush the man whose unmoved confidence in God doubts not His power to sustain? While timid friends of little faith tremble at his expected downfall, and foes, charged with malignant glee, commence too soon their wicked sport, he simply *rests*; he hides himself in God, until the storm is over: and then, to the astonishment of all, comes forth like one resurrected from the grave, pre-

pared to re-enter the field of conquest, and achieve still greater victories for God, by heralding to a doubting world the sustaining power of God's *sufficient grace*.

What can the blight of sickness do to him who has thus learned to walk with God? It can afflict him for a little time, impair his strength until he is unable to work for the Master as he might wish, but it cannot touch his faith; and he believes that, should God desire his assistance, He will provide the necessary power; that "as his days his strength shall be;" that a heavier burden shall never be imposed than God furnishes ability to bear; and as each cord of hope, which binds his trusting soul to earth, is cut away, his unfettered spirit contemplates the anticipated change with joy, and not with grief, until freed from this earth-clod, which has detained it now so long, it soars away from trial, pain and sorrow, to rest forever on the bosom of Infinite Love.

Nor can poverty inflict a deeper wound: for the companionship of Jesus, the poor man's friend, who, by experience sad and lonely, knew what it meant to want, having been homeless and weary without a place to lay His head,

is most wonderfully comforting. Close by the side of the unfortunate He takes His place, journeys with him day by day, thrills his heart and invigorates his weary footsteps as He gives words of sympathy and promises of the better Country, so that the weariness and toil are measurably forgotten in yearnings to depart, that he may see these glories for himself and "behold the King in His beauty."

And though the heart know its full share of sorrow in the remembrance of faded hopes, as this same Sufferer tells so kindly of His own heart, pierced and broken in our behalf, we forget the bitterness of our little cup of sorrow, and join His waiting ones in their glad song of praise, that after enduring a little longer, they shall be forever with the Lord. There is a *bright side*, and the pain we suffer is not so distressing as it might be. Many of our trials disappear as darkness before the rising sun, and those remaining are buried when our wearied frames demand their final resting-place.

CHAPTER III.

DEEPER WANT.

But let us suppose that this well-founded hope of future blessedness, which gilds the darkest storm-cloud, rendering it rather an object of sublimity than of dread, does not exist; and that all of comfort, rest or satisfaction the expectant heart may obtain, is limited to what this life affords. No heaven, where those who overcame, recount their victories, but forget their sorrows; no reunion of loved friends, whose memory we cherished for words of cheer, deeds of love, and smiles which so electrified our being, that labor for them was delight; no peace of mind, at consciousness of forgiveness of sin which we well knew merited the condemnation we now dread, but a dim uncertainty of everything beyond the grave; a fear, coupled with gloomy apprehension that possibly some unthought-of calamity is about to add to the catalogue of earthly want and trial a more distressing visitation, as the pen-

alty of sin. Who, under such conditions, would be able to maintain his cheerfulness, or look upon life with a large degree of satisfaction? Fifty years of much sorrow and disappointment, during which we vainly hoped for happier days, and no prospect of relief! Show us the man who is able to tolerate the thought! Let him arise, then let him speak, and tell to a sorrowing world what magic power was born in him, by which he is qualified to meet the storms of time and eternity, without the favor of the God of Love! His words would die with no more influence than the pointless arguments of one deranged. Well might we curse the hour that brought us* to the light. With good reason we might testify that life is a farce, and is not worth the living, if all our gains are to be outweighed by hopelessness and remorse.

And yet, dear stranger to the love of Christ, such is the life that you are leading! "Without God and without hope!"* Living among men who seek their own and love you not, compelled to meet a destiny of weal or woe, subject to such griefs as afflict man who is "born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward," griefs

* Eph. ii, 12.

which defy the sympathies of the faithful few who fain would lift from your heart the sorrows they would gladly share, but which must be borne in solitude, as a crushing weight that wears your strength away, and no help for the present nor hope for the future! Was ever want as sore as this? Your life is a history of the deepest kind of want; and though you have been living on, unconscious of, or but partially awakened to, the startling fact, as he whose life is being undermined by some unknown but subtle malady, the fact remains; and I mean to let you know it, that measures may be taken toward a remedy. So listen kindly as I seek to describe the condition of your soul; and as you are made conscious, first of one want, and then of another, be not backward in assenting, but acknowledge that it is so.

Though the theme may not be as pleasing to consider as those of the chapters which shall follow, be patient with me, for it is important that you should understand what is your condition while a stranger to God's love.

First, then, you are in want of peace. To illustrate the meaning of this may not be out

of place. When we behold the glassy lake, smiling in its sequestered beauty, with its surface so calm and free from wavelets that the foliage upon its borders is mirrored in its depths, we say, "This is a peaceful lake." When two nations, formerly at variance, seeking by bloodshed to defeat each other's purposes, have put down their weapons and signed the treaty, we say that they are now at peace. And when two hearts, one human and one divine, blend in perfect sympathy, with the rebellion of the former, which alone had been at fault, subdued, and all disobedience abandoned, when we know that this human heart performs the commands of the divine, we testify that it is at peace with God.

Now we have asserted that you are in want of peace; and unless you can bear testimony to the power of God's converting grace, it is the truth; for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;*" and without exception, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."† "They have all gone aside; they have altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."‡

* Isa. lvii, 21. † Jer. xvii, 9. ‡ Ps. xiv, 3.

The cup of pleasure may be filled, the voice of merriment may drive, for an hour, uneasiness from the mind, but when all is quiet, and the soul is left in the presence of its Maker, if that soul has not been brought to Christ, there is no peace. God is righteous, and His law has been transgressed; and wherever the guilty one may be, the piercing eye of God beholds him.

We have known people to suffer from embarrassment while engaged in the performance of actual duty, by the presence of those who would not cease to gaze at them. They have repeatedly been made to understand what it means to be hampered by uninvited scrutinizers, who have refused to leave either the workmen or their handiwork alone; and they have been disturbed, notwithstanding the fact that they were doing right, executing workmanship of which they needed not to be ashamed.

But how intensified was this annoyance when, at the dictation of some evil spirit which for the time predominated, they did wickedly! perhaps defrauding a confiding neighbor—thus inflicting upon themselves still deeper injury—and were watched in the very act! The hot

blood coursing through them as an electric fire enkindled the blush of shame they vainly sought to conceal; the downcast eye, which could no longer look into the face of the astonished friend, was the poor substitute for the apology they were powerless to give; and the necessitated watchfulness of this neighbor, whose trust had thus been shaken, became a source of torture to them.

And yet, oh sinner, there is an eye fastened upon you, from whose vigilance you cannot escape. The shadows of night do not seclude you from its gaze. Take the "wings of the morning" and flee to earth's most solitary hiding-place, but it will detect you there; and with the consciousness of guilt, from the transgression of God's holy law, how can peace dwell within your darkened soul? It is impossible.

Then, too, you are not at peace with yourself; for conscience, the faithful monitor, is at work within, destroying the pleasure which sinful indulgence would otherwise afford, administering its just rebuke, searching out and bringing to your notice each secret fault. Oh, tell me not of inward tranquillity while far away

from God; for though the cry is “peace, peace,” it is not true, for there is no peace. What want to which the flesh is heir can be compared to this? We may be poor, but true; ill, but ready to obey; bereaved, but trustful; sad, yet still rejoicing in God’s love; but we *cannot* be at variance with our Maker, and at the same time enjoy the peace which attends obedience to God.

Then, you are in want of such advantages as only Christian experience can afford. Possibly you have all things else, but you are poor, and would be poor with a double portion now placed at your command. These things are convenient and desirable, but they are uncertain; and should not be mistaken for exhaustless fountains of delight. They afford a degree of this, they always will if rightly used, and should be sought with diligence, to answer the purposes for which they were designed, but not as food for the immortal soul. Everything in its place will prove a blessing, but out of place, may work incalculable injury. Salt is good, but not to slake the fevered sufferer’s thirst. Ice is a blessing in its place, but furnishes no stimulant to the smoldering embers,

as fire is required to defy the rigor of winter. And the abundance which Providence has conferred in acknowledgment of your tireless energy, may furnish opportunity for the accomplishment of good, and promote enjoyment which otherwise must be denied you; but God never designed that these little things, great though they may appear to you, should be accepted as substitutes for Himself; nor that you should be so unwise as to close your eyes to the Benefactor, from the tips of whose fingers drop these minor comforts, while He still offers you Himself. If the favors He bestows, monopolizing as they do the undivided thought of their recipients, are so appreciable, what must God Himself be? Content not yourself with accepting a few tokens of His goodness, by which you judge Him to be a God of benevolence, but satisfy your heart by actual test, and you shall find His love so overwhelming, that the material comforts once accounted as your greatest dependence, will sink into such comparative insignificance, that whether still extended or withdrawn, life will hold for you an independent charm, unknown amid former days of most unparalleled prosperity.

The human soul, immortal as the God who made it, has cravings for such food as nothing touching merely the physical and intellectual can satisfy: it always has been so, and always will be; for it is in the nature of man's being; and this craving is for God Himself, in whose image he was made. Nothing ever has satisfied or ever will satisfy the human soul but God. We need not tell you this; you know it well. There have been moments when, alone with God and nature, every form in earth and sky has seemed to tell you of another world, and a better life, where sin is unknown, and this nervous dash for fleeting comforts gives place to something more substantial; and had it not been for the dread uncertainty connected with the thought of its approach, you would almost have desired to see the dawning of the morning which should initiate you into the glories of this strange new life; for so much of strife and weariness have always been coupled with whatever you have gained, and such consciousness of hunger still unsatisfied has accompanied its attainment, that, with those of whom Paul tells us, who had seen much of earth, you have desired a better country.*

*Heb. xi, 16.

You cannot help it; the feeling is there, and must remain; for it is begotten by God and not yourself; and oh, what a failure he makes of life, who comes into the world and returns to dust, without heeding the voice of the Divine bidding him lightly to esteem the things of time, and give his supreme affection unto God!

Yet this is the position of the unconverted. But reader, if you are unsaved to-day, we pray you consider carefully before turning heedlessly from these thoughts, for the subject is directly brought to your attention. Responsibility is now laid upon you which possibly you failed to realize before. You need God. You know it, I know it, God knows it. Nothing but the consolation of His forgiving presence can afford you the comfort you crave this hour. You may not have known the meaning of trouble as many have, but in this world it is usually well learned. Before you return to earth you doubtless shall have had your full share in one form or another; and when you find yourself tossed by its highest billow, remember the prediction entered here. Prepare for it! Seek the never failing shelter of God's sufficient grace; for you need this most of all.

Let me present this thought in other words and preclude the possibility of mistaking the theoretical for the practical. This is rather an appeal from my heart than a book of theory, that you may be brought to meditate upon the most vital interests of this earnest life. There are theorizers enough without me, and I will not interfere with their necessary work, but simply strive to lead you out of darkness into the light. God has done this for me, and now I must speak, lest my duty should be left unperformed. So may the dear Lord direct the arrow of conviction, as in scanning your experience you are convinced that the need of your life is, *heart knowledge of God*.

Nothing is more common than an intellectual knowledge of Him; for people either read their Bibles, or are so nearly related to others who do, that it is almost impossible for those of intelligence to remain long without such knowledge. The boast of a skeptic to me one day was, that when young, he committed to memory the New Testament; yet he was a stranger to God's saving grace. And this thought is but suggestive of facts connected with the lives of thousands whose opportuni-

ties have been far more extended than those of this poor man, whose position and associates in the world tended but to keep him from the house of God.

I mean the throng of hearers who idly listen to the preaching of the gospel, appreciate the force of each convincing thought in which their souls' condition is portrayed, but go their way and straightway forget what manner of men they are.* These are useful men, without whom many of the interests of the church would suffer; they hold positions of responsibility and trust, are never wanting in the hour of emergency, but are, nevertheless, strangers to God's love, having only the *form* of godliness. They are aware of it, and so apparent has the fact become to all, that it may be stated without danger of passing uncharitable judgment.

As the roar of the cataract in its noisy course has ceased to disturb the repose of those long accustomed to the sound, the story of a dying Savior's love falls without effect upon the ears of these regardless listeners, and their callous hearts remain unmoved. Of all the un-

*Jas. i, 24.

converted, these are most difficult to reach. Yet their want of practical godliness is not less than that of the Indian who has never heard the name of Christ, while their opportunities render them more responsible a thousand fold. Is this the condition of our reader? What then can be done? Is there any power in words of argument, warning or entreaty? Plead not your good works for a moment, for though your labors have encircled you by the wall of self-assurance which appears to you impregnable, it must come to the ground; for it is built without foundation. Your nature is polluted with the sin which is but vainly hidden from the eyes of men; nor can the loftiest pretensions wash away the stain. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Though he wash him in the purest water that ever gurgled from the mountain side, though he continue his ablutions to his dying day, the color remains the same; he is black, and all the waters of the ocean cannot wash him white.

So it is with your soul, oh you who for all these years have professed so much. Why wear before men the garments of a saint, yet by unholy example restrain honest enquirers from

coming to the fold of God? Do you imagine that the church can cleanse your sin? Though the churches of earth were to unite, with their power tenfold augmented, they would be unable to save you, and for all that they can do, you must descend to the darkest despair! What now will you do? You are lost! *You are lost!!* and to this very hour there is no life within your darkened soul. Weep and lament! you do well to weep, for vainly shall you seek shelter within the hallowed church, while your heart is still withheld from the Mighty to Save! False Christians by flattery may perchance deceive you, and you may deceive yourself; but you cannot deceive your Maker; in His sight you still are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."

There is great satisfaction in laboring for those whose hearts are stirred at the story of God's love, and who yield them to His service, the only tribute of gratitude they can give. Who would not labor for them? Who could refuse strength, time, or pains, when the result, in penitents, bowing at the Hallowed Cross, cheers the Christian onward in his work of love? It is a scene that pleases God, and which the

angels behold with joy. But when faithful diligence is met with cold reserve, and no impression is made upon those who knew it all before,* the Christian would feel depressed were it not for the consciousness of duty done, and that he can leave results with God. Yet who does not know that unnumbered inconsistent ones burden the church, hinder the cause of God, and expose themselves to the risk of a frightful doom, forasmuch as their sin is against light and knowledge? Do we talk of want? This is want which baffles my power of expression, and so I shall not attempt it; but leave the enlightened sinner who presumes to withhold himself from God, to the meditation of his own heart, and the mercy of the One he disobeys.

But here I am confronted by one, who, with unpretended innocence, has another story he would tell. After reading and heart-searching he declares himself unconscious of the existence of such wants as we have named. Conscience seems not specially to accuse; as for peace with God, he never considered the thought; the consolation of Christian expe-

*Luke xii., 47, 48.

rience is something of which he has not dreamed, and such a thing as knowing the way but refusing to walk therein, is a mysterious inconsistency of which he would not be guilty. He is untroubled, unawakened, comfortable, unconscious of any serious lack, and would not be disturbed. My friend, in that same testimony, so innocent and unaffected, you express one of the *greatest wants of all*. And if you remain undisturbed from this hour, it shall not be from any fault of mine. I am going to do all I can to arouse you, then leave you to your own responsibility.

Were you reposing on the border of a precipice, you would thank me for awakening you; if you were sleeping in the upper chamber, while the crackling flames below were madly leaping toward you, I should, in arousing you, only perform the kindness of a friend; but you are doing what is worse, and it is time for you to be apprised; so regard me only as a friend, though I speak plain words in the endeavor to convince you how far you are from peace and safety.

You say you are "unconscious of the want." Does that testimony change the fact? Is not the blind man, approaching (as he supposes) the

draw that bridges the stream, but which has been swung, as truly nearing a watery grave as though he were conscious of it? And shall he not as inevitably meet his doom, unless prevented by some friendly hand?

My friend, you are walking a dangerous path, but you cannot see your way; yet the stream of death is no less certainly before you. We pray you to stop! Stop where you are, lest the next step be a fatal one! God has said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." You have not been born again. Your own testimony is the clearest evidence to the fact; and you cannot see the kingdom of God. You need salvation, whether conscious or unconscious of the fact. No argument is necessary to convince you. Now what are you going to do? seek it, turn from the open bridge, or go forward to your own destruction? Take your choice; but if it be death, say not you perished ignorantly, with no one to offer a warning word.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROFFERED SUPPLY.

Rest is never so welcome as when continued toil has wearied us. He most appreciates the reviving power of joy who has been torn by deepest sorrows. Hunger long endured renders palatable the plainest food. We become accustomed to the sunshine after many days of cloudless beauty have bequeathed their charms to our appreciation, and storm-clouds but prepare us to herald its return with heartier cheer. No man can speak of home with the satisfaction of him, who, throughout years of wandering, has learned, to his heart's sorrow, the withering power of loneliness: and none can look forward to the supply of want with such interest and expectancy as he whose keen convictions have impressed the persuasion that his lack is not a fancy, but is deep, sore and distressing. He is then prepared to seek it with an intensity of feeling which is something

new to him; former efforts were comparatively feeble, made from duty or inclination, but now necessity induces them.

Men as a class toil for daily bread, but none will be induced to put forth such exertion as he whose arm is nerved to prepare for fast approaching famine. It is the duty of every one to preserve and sustain the life and health which God has given; but no such diligence is shown as when they are held in jeopardy. And though you may have known for years, kind reader, that something has been lacking in your life, the absence of which has produced occasional unrest, it may be that you are now more thoroughly awakened to the sense of want, and are craving its supply.

I hope that this is so, for I wish to tell you some things which, in that case, may prove of lasting advantage to your life; and I am going to presume it *is* so. I am going to presume that you are without the supply, that you desire above all things to have it, and this will enable me more clearly to point it out to you.

God loves us. Whoever has learned to observe this truth, and to *respond*, will not be heard murmuring of his wants; for in God

he will always find such a bountiful supply, that if he speaks at all, it will be of the marvelous goodness of the One who has come to be his all in all. Can you consider the nature of love, which always blesses, but is never known to curse its object, associate the thought with the boundlessness of infinity, and then conceive of any want God's children suffer, that this love cannot or will not supply? Such want does not exist. God has created us, and holds the *power* to satisfy our every want. If He loves us He *will* not withhold any good thing within His *power* to bestow. Now if He has the *power*, and is *willing*, our wants shall be supplied as naturally as the earth is supplied with the light and heat of the sun, *unless* the supply is forfeited by some preventing cause. Let us consult His word on this point and see what He has promised.

“Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”*

“But my God shall supply *all your need* according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”†

* Ps. xxxvii, 4.

† Phil. iv, 19.

"O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for *there is no want to them that fear Him.*"‡

"They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them to drink of the river of Thy pleasures."§

Now after such assurances as these, if we are conscious of existing want, let us not judge that it is owing to inability or unwillingness on the part of God to supply us, but rather a failure, somewhere, on our part, to comply with the conditions. Remember evermore that God loves you; let that thought sink deeply into your heart; let it cheer you by day and comfort you by night; let it intensify each joy and lighten every sorrow; let it strengthen you in weakness and give courage for the hour of trial. Sing it to those you love! Tell it to the world! Whisper it in prayer!—*God is Love.* But you call for evidence; something more tangible than this. The promises are good, it is well to hear and say that God loves us, but let us have more substantial proof that it is so. Pictures cannot satisfy the thirsty, words furnish little strength to him who calls for food.

‡ Ps. xxxiv, 9.

§ Ps. xxxvi, 8.

We are thirsty, we are hungry; give us satisfaction! *Convince* us that God loves us!

One of the first and surest evidences of love is *sacrifice*. If there is no sacrifice we may well question the genuineness of all profession. The world over, love and sacrifice are inseparable. Would it be natural for a father professing much love for his daughter, to withhold food, raiment, shelter or defense while it lay within his power to furnish them? Would he be a true man, while speaking words of love, to betray unkindness of heart? We do not look for such manifestations from a father. The true father is always moved with pity and compassion toward his defenseless child. Her call for aid reaches to his very heart, and ensures the most sincere response. The greatest sacrifices to promote her happiness are gladly made. And could a son confide in a mother's love, however warmly expressed in words, if her bearing toward him was habitually unkind? No; and it is unnatural for the maternal heart to confer such pretended love as this. Nothing on earth is stronger than a mother's love, and it clings when everything else has been swept away by misfortune or even dis-

grace. No burden is too heavy for the mother to bear when she bears it for her own boy. No task imposed is so difficult that she hesitates to undertake it. She considers it a joy to bear the burden; the disagreeableness of the task is forgotten in the pleasurable thought that she is conferring a favor upon one who is dearer to her than her own being.

While he is absent she thinks of him, prays for him, and nothing is left unperformed that will minister to his comfort, or contribute to his success. Somehow, his wardrobe is kept in neat repair, he little knows by what devotion of her time and labor, and never shall if she is able to prevent. She will not tell him, how, after the other loved members of the household had been provided for with all that her thoughtfulness alone could suggest, and had retired to sleep away the troubles of the day, he was not forgotten, but that the midnight lamp furnished her with light, as stitch after stitch was taken, that this boy, her heart's idol, might pursue his studies without embarrassment at the distant college.

She can never do too much for him. She cannot do enough, though her share of "wom-

an's work" is never done. Perhaps he does not deserve such attention, we cannot tell; but whether he deserves it or not, 'tis given just as cheerfully, and no one can hinder her. She *will* work for him *any way*, as long as she is able. No matter how numerous her duties, or oppressive her cares, there will always be a little time to devote to the interest of her boy. Why is this? What prompts such sacrifice? The answer is, *she loves him*; and stands ready to give, not only time and labors, but life itself for him if necessary. Her willingness to sacrifice, better than any words that she might utter, demonstrates the love she will never deny.

And it is the same wherever love exists. Garden-beds are searched for the sweetest bouquets. From the marts of trade, the handsomest birthday gifts are purchased, regardless of expense. Handiwork, the result of the most careful toil, is given. Years of labor, in behalf of those beloved, are made to pass as though but a few days had gone. Homes are adorned, luxuries are obtained, the benefits of art and education are secured, fortunes are amassed, fame is won, and everything that can be acquired

by skillfulness of hand or brilliancy of mind, is offered at the shrine of love. We affirm that true love is always accompanied by sacrifice of some kind. Is its object in danger? We are there to protect. In trouble? We hold ourselves in readiness to assist. In pain? We will provide relief at any cost. In sorrow? That sorrow must not be borne alone, but we come at once to share it. And the most convincing demonstration of our affection is always to be seen in the cheerfulness with which we subject ourselves to pain or sacrifice, that we may benefit the one we love.

Now we have asserted that God loves sinful man. What proof have we of this? What sacrifice has He made as a demonstration of this love? Oh, let all the people know! Read, every one, these words: "God so loved the world that *He gave His only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* This great sacrifice who can understand? The longer we think of it the more wonderful does it seem. Had it been rendered for loyal and obedient subjects, the marvel would not be so great; but it was

* Jno. iii, 16

for the benefit of foes. Yet it was willingly, cheerfully made. The love which would induce a father to sacrifice time, energy and means, to secure the rescue of his innocent and confiding child, we all can comprehend; we can even see how he could consent to defend that child at the hazard of his own life; and, furthermore, to lay down that life in his behalf. Such affection would be the natural expression of the paternal heart. But this would be the profoundest exhibition for which we might look, from any father. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But how utterly bewildered would we be to think of a father consenting to the sacrifice, not of his own life, but of the more precious life to him, of a child beloved, for the purpose of delivering from the penalty of death one who had misused and wronged him! Yet God so loved the rebellious world, that, for its rescue, He gave His only begotten Son!

There were the angels chanting about His throne, but those fair ones were unequal to the work. He searched His realm, but none save One could answer the demand, and save our

doomed, rebellious race! His son! His *only* son! And so He gave Him! "Go," He said, "Thou art my dearest, best beloved, my greatest; *I give Thee for the ransom of the world!*" Oh, reader out of Christ, you know it all; you have heard it from your childhood—this story of God's love! You have listened to your sainted mother as she told it and made you promise you would meet her in heaven by-and-by. Your father has read it until the old family Bible is worn out; yet it is meaningless to you.

Careless one, God loves you. How shall we make you understand it? Defy His patience, forget His kindness, spurn His mercy, if you must; but He loves you still.

Thoughtless youth, in whose heart the fires of ambition burn, content yourself without Him, if you can; search the earth for something better than His love, if you think it can be found—search diligently, for time is passing, and you have not yet gained your heart's desire; but when your feet are weary, and your heart is sad and disappointed, look to God! He will hear, for His love will not forsake you. Nay; wait not till then, for time is short, and

death comes suddenly. Venture no delay; He loves you now, then seek His face at once!

And you, upon whose hoary head would rest to-day a crown of glory, had you been walking in the ways of righteousness, but who have been impervious to conviction these twenty years, God loves *you*. Explore still further, if you must, the regions of sinfulness, whose labyrinths ensnare their victims in everlasting death. Your time is short, you have not long to stay; but if at any time you find yourself separated from hope by a gulf which is impassable, remember that it needed not to be so, for you also were the object of God's love.

But we do not purpose to enter upon an extended explanation of the vicarious atonement of Christ, for we believe that by far the greater number of our readers have a fair understanding of that theme already; perhaps all of them. And should any one be ignorant on this subject, the New Testament, if searched, will give better instruction than anything would be that I can say. Most of our unconverted readers are classed among those who understand, but have never embraced the Gospel of

Christ. They have not realized how much God would be to them if they accepted Him, though they have read it again and again; and so we wish simply to bring this thought to their special consideration by asking, "What want is there that God will not supply? If His love is so great that the best at His command, the greatest treasure in heaven or earth, the dearest to Himself of all, His only Son, was freely given, is there anything within the scope of our imagination that He will refuse?" In the words of the Apostle, let me ask, "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" And is it expecting too much for us to look for the actual supply of the wants we so sorely feel? Indeed, no! We are His own children, and should look for nothing less than this from Him. Let us not do Him who is our Father the injustice and dishonor of doubting either His power or His love by expecting anything less.

If you, as a father, had bequeathed to your son a fortune sufficient to keep him from financial embarrassment for the remainder of his life, yet had withheld one or two conveniences, the

loss of which you would not notice, but without which your son would feel disturbed, and be quite unhappy, would you refuse to grant your boy's request, as with saddened heart he made known to you the secret of his sorrow? You could not find it in your heart to do so; but with sympathy for his sufferings, and joy that you were able to appease them, you would at once grant his desire.

Now God gives Christ to all who will accept Him, and, moreover, has promised to withhold "no good thing." . . . But suppose your boy refused the *fortune* proffered, how different the case would be! Your surprise and disappointment that the best you could bestow was spurned, would be immeasurable, and compel the wise conclusion that *less* valuable expressions of your love would *also* be undesired. So in the case before us. If, for any reason, Christ, God's richest gift, is disdained, how can God offer a lesser gift? If Christ is *accepted fully*, we may well expect that all minor wants, with Him, shall be supplied; if He is *rejected*, we need look for but little at God's hands, for in the act of rejecting Him, we are guilty of the greatest possible

ingratitude, and merit the punishment which shall not be slow to come, as the just penalty of our sin. “He that despised *Moses*’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and, hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”*

Would you, my reader, be guilty of such ingratitude? Indeed, you would not! No human friend, whose love might prove inconstant, would be likely to receive such treatment at your hand as that; much less the God whose love can never change. Then we conclude that you are ready to accept God’s proffered help—a supply for every want! and join you in praise to Him who withholds “no good thing from them that walk uprightly.”

What, then, do you want? Tell us, that we may assist you in obtaining the supply. Is it peace, that you may look up with confidence knowing all is well? that God no longer frowns, but smiles upon you? that, as you look within,

* Heb. x, 28, 29.

where once the lashings of accusing conscience brought pain to your soul and imbibited each cup of pleasure, there may be no further accusation? The Lord holds it for you, He is the God of peace; and may “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. Is it the consolation which only Christian experience can afford you? that when fortune fails and reverses afflict, you shall have a reserve upon which you may draw as largely as you wish, and which, like the widow’s cruse of oil, will never be exhausted? that when storms of trouble which no doubt will come, burst, as tornadoes, upon the quietude of your life, shattering hopes and defeating cherished plans, you will have a hiding-place, a safe and happy shelter? This, also, is to be found in God; and you, with the confidence of David, may be enabled to say, “For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.”

After many years of faithful attendance at the house of God, but without a knowledge of His saving power, are you at last convinced that without Him you can do nothing? Be

thankful, and know that your case is within the bounds of God's sufficient grace; for "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

Or is your greatest need the realization of your sinfulness, which is essential to the proper effort toward escape? God is also equal to that emergency; indeed, His Spirit only can awaken the soul dead in sin, and is given for that purpose—a guide, to lead us unto Christ. If God has given Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life," will He refuse guidance to blinded souls that they may be led to the way they cannot see, and walk in it? Let the remembrance that God is Love forbid such injustice to His benevolence.

CHAPTER V.

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HOW TO SECURE IT.

Knowledge which is at no time put to practical use, can be of but small account, and may even prove to be a fruitful source of pain. It were better that the rich man never knew of the place of rest where Lazarus was to be forever free from the poverty and suffering of earth, with the glories of an eternity in God's presence just before him, than to be tortured by the consciousness of what might have been, had he, "in his lifetime," made proper use of the wealth which God had given him. If he could have supposed himself to be no worse off than others, that all were to be equally unfortunate, that there were no place of rest from whence so much as one drop of water might be craved to cool his tongue, there possibly would have been at least a faint hope of tolerating the punishment with a degree of resignation. But the knowledge of that far-off

heaven, the intervening gulf, the opportunities forever gone, the conviction that his unhappiness had been self-imposed, and that he, also, might have gone with Lazarus to share the delights of that land of rest, but can never, never do so now,—this knowledge but intensified his agony, while it conferred no possible good.

Likewise must the intelligence that for our every want there is a bountiful supply, affect us, if by negligence, misfortune, or any conceivable cause we fail of obtaining our heart's desire. And I could not consider myself guiltless, after having awakened in any human breast a desire for these better things, were I to proceed further without giving the clearest instruction within my power, as to how they may be secured. To tantalize is to torture, and he who perpetrates the deed is cruel. Let me be innocent. I would not trifle with an awakened, conscience-smitten soul. We have told you that your want is needless; that in Christ may be found an adequate supply. But that is not enough. How shall it be made available?—this is the question which concerns us now. The granary may be filled with wheat, but we starve unless admittance can be

gained. There is enough pure morning air to expand ten million lungs twice told; but what is that to him, who, locked within the stone-bound vault, is stifling from the poison of the deathly prison-house? Unbolt the door, spring the lock, break the hinges, anything, any way to rescue him; but release the prisoner, for he is dying; and make haste, or it will be too late! Now throw up the windows, or carry him to the door, and let him breathe freely. The man is saved!

There is food for the sinner from the finest of the wheat, still he is famishing. There is such atmosphere for him to breathe as might become to him a source of endless life. There is water for him to drink which might quench his thirst forevermore.* It is the love of God! Above him, below him, on every side, and extending out into infinity! It is a mighty sea! It is a boundless ocean! It reaches to heaven! It spreads unto the uttermost parts of the earth! But the prisoner is in his cell! Satan has bound him hand and foot. I hear the clanking of his chains. The door is locked and bolted and barred! He is smothering, gasping, dying!

* Jno. iv, 14.

Let him out! Release the prisoner for the love you bear the race! He is our own brother, flesh of our flesh, and he is perishing! Soon it will be too late! Oh, who will help us to unlock the iron door, and bring him to the place where he may breathe and drink and live? Jesus, thou friend of sinners, assist our feeble labors; Thy help is needed, for our strength is small! Thanks be to God, He does assist! He came to earth for this. Hear the utterance sublime: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the *opening of the prison to them that are bound*; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." †

† Isa lxi, 1, 2, 3.

Still you enquire, "How shall the knowledge of God's power to save and to supply my wants, be made available? How shall this fulness become my own, so that I may say, 'He is *my* Savior, He *saves me now*, and with Himself has promised all things?'" The medium through which you are to be made partaker of the treasures of the Infinite may be expressed in these few simple words:—

"*Believe and accept* the testimony of God's love for you through Christ, in whom is seen its greatest manifestation; and *salvation is yours* with its attendant privileges." "By grace are ye saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."* Then, when you have thus received *as a gift* this great salvation, be true to God and *love* Him in return. God has loved you and loves you now. He has given Christ to save you. If you believe it, and if you accept His love and His sacrifice, what else can you do but *reciprocate* His love? Now I have given you the answer in brief. But this instruction stands for a principle that will revolutionize your entire life. You may not have

*Eph. ii, 8.

been very bad before; possibly you have been as good as the young ruler who sought to know what he must do to be saved, and when apprised, concluded not to do it. You may even have been as good as that; but if you bring yourself to heed this advice, a radical change will nevertheless be wrought. We shall now see what the confidence you thus exercise in God will induce you to do or sacrifice at His desire. Though your salvation is accepted through faith, certain *works* will also characterize your life; for God requires that "the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and that he return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him." Suppose now, that your past life has been displeasing to God in some way and that you are aware of it; suppose that, notwithstanding the fact of your having come up to quite a fair average according to the world's estimate of goodness, there still have been many ways in which you have consciously disobeyed His commands and thus grieved His spirit. Will you *continue* to do such things after plighting your faith so solemnly? Knowingly, you cannot, if you are true. Instead of

that, the thought of having grieved Him will give birth to a sorrow which will melt your heart, start the tear of penitence, and engender such a hatred for sin that you will flee from its approach as from a venomous serpent. The very fact that sin is displeasing to God will be sufficient to drive you from it; and the self-denial required in forsaking sin will be a joy because it is rendered for the One you love. How easy the life of faith will become if you are actuated by such a principle; and with what willing feet you will hasten to do the bidding of Him you have learned to adore! You will not hesitate as you consider the possible results of performing at His command what seems to you an unpleasant service, to say the least. One consideration alone will ever suffice to subdue such uprisings as would, if cherished, render you uncomfortable and mar your peace; and that consideration is, that you are doing the will of God; and, regardless of results, for which God Himself becomes responsible, you will proceed without a question or a fear. The remembrance of God's love to you, how He saw death's cruel blow descending upon you, and though you were indifferent and rebellious,

how He sent His Son, who cheerfully came and received that blow Himself, though He already knew that it was to be at the cost of His life—the vision of your Savior in the garden, wrestling there alone, with the burden of this world's sin crushing Him, forgotten by His disciples, His Father's face withdrawn, His breaking heart extorting the testimony, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,”—the remembrance of this, and the thought of the untold benefits purchased thus for you, will so thrill your heart now given up to Him, that you will be unable to do enough for Him in return; and when He says “Forsake all and follow,” you will obey, though it be at the greatest sacrifice you have ever known.

If it becomes a question whether you will have God or certain pleasant associates of former days, whose company and attractions always gave you joy, but who are careless and even flippant when subjects of religious import are considered, these associates shall hear from your lips a firm but friendly adieu, for creatures shall “no more divide your choice,” and your selection of friends shall be made from among those who also are lovers of your God.

If former worldly pleasures, harmless though you had always considered them to be, present their demands upon your attention and a portion of your time, yet bring with them a disturbing influence which checks the progress of this new life, and throws a chill upon your ardor, one look to God for help, one thought of His sacrifice for you, and the remembrance of His command will be sufficient. All these worldly considerations must go; you will forsake them now and forevermore. And so with all things strictly sinful, and those of which you have serious doubts; if you are related to God as you ought to be, you will be restrained from indulging, lest it should displease Him.

The highest possible motive by which we may be actuated in seeking God, one which seems to me most worthy a child created in His image, one which must insure His *special* notice, and appeal most effectively to His great heart of love, a motive which might well command the admiration of the angels, and arrest them in their songs of praise that they may listen and look down to see,—is to seek God because we know that He is *love*, that He cannot do wrong, that He is worthy of our

utmost confidence, and that a desire to know Him has led us captive; that we behold so much of goodness, kindness and benevolence in Him, as to render us unable to longer do without Him; that since we have listened to the story of His sacrifice for us, we are impelled by uncontrollable longings to know Him for ourselves; that we *must* know Him at any cost; that life is unendurable without this knowledge; that our hearts are broken because we still are strangers to the One who loved us so.

Oh, let such meditations work upon the sinner's heart, lead him to forget himself in the effort to secure this treasure, to "sell all that he hath" that he may obtain it; no other inspiration will be necessary to a life of purity, loveliness and self-sacrifice. He scarcely will know the meaning of duty, for his love to God will give delight to the most menial service, because it is rendered for Jesus' sake. *Privilege* will be the word expressive of his thought, for everything is a privilege which is rendered as an offering of love. Crosses will become strangely light, though to others they are burdensome; for a new idea shall have taken possession of his being; it is the thought of pleasing God;

and if cross-bearing is most pleasing unto Him, it also is most pleasing to the bearer.

But just here some one arrests us, whose objection finds a counterpart in ten thousand honest hearts, and it is this:

"I cannot feel thus toward God. I am orthodox in faith, I believe that Christ 'came into the world to save sinners,' but everything seems unreal to me. My heart is stubborn and obdurate; no such feelings toward Him were ever born in me; to make myself love God is an impossibility; I would do so if I were able, but lack the power. I have listened to stirring appeals, attended meetings of protracted effort, but my heart has never been moved for an hour. Is there any help for me?"

We answer: "Yes, there *is* help;" and if you will consent to accept it, you, also, shall be brought into the light. Still remember that God loves you, and that He has provided a way for your escape; a straight and narrow path which leads to everlasting life. You cannot see that way, which is Jesus Christ; something else is necessary to bring you to it, that you may safely walk in it and stumble not.

He who is unacquainted with the trackless forest, and unaccustomed to explore its labyrinths, cannot be expected, without a guide, to walk in safety there, or come forth to the roadside without taking many an unnecessary step. He may not be far from the highway, though unconscious that it is so near, and may yet wander far astray. For hours he may weary himself by taking steps which but place him further from his rest; or he may unconsciously ramble round and round, supposing he is moving directly onward, only to reach, at last, the point from whence he started. There is no certainty of his finding the road or the woodman's cabin while he thus wanders silently and alone. And how great is his discomfort as in solitude he seeks the relief which is still so near. He is in trouble; the thorns have pierced his hands, the undergrowth has tripped him, and he is footsore and weary, though deliverance has failed to come. What shall he do? He knows that the roadside cannot be very far away, yet to find it seems impossible. To roam longer thus is folly. Night-fall soon will increase his bewilderment by excluding the light which stimulates the

hope that still remains. Let him take not another uncertain step. Let him stand still. Now let his voice echo throughout the silent wood that the skilled pioneer, who knows the forest well, may listen, and hasten to deliver. This he does, and his voice is heard. The reverberating answer thrills the rover's heart. Without difficulty the woodman, from his cabin, reaches the traveler's side. A few words of greeting, the direction to follow the guide, and soon the once lost and anxious wanderer walks joyfully the roadside.

Dear friend, you are endeavoring to find the way of life; your earnest words are proof of this. You desire to feel toward God as you know His love deserves, that you may walk in the "highway cast up for the ransomed." You know not how; you have need of further help; you are in trouble; the brambles of sin pierce you on every side; you stumble over arguments the ungodly have made, seeking to prove religion false; and you are so bewildered in the labyrinth that you are discouraged and scarcely know where you stand. You need a guide to lead you to this way; it is of no use for you to proceed

without one; you have proved this to your dismay. Stand where you are! for a guide has been provided. Now call for Him, and He assuredly will come to your relief. That guide is the Holy Spirit of God, promised by the Savior very long ago, before He ascended to His Father. Do you indeed feel unaccountably indifferent toward the God you fain would serve, and who has given such proof of love to you? This is not an uncommon complaint. All are so without the Holy Spirit's power, and cannot love without His help. But the Holy Spirit is given for this intent—to show us the way, to break the stony heart, to pierce with conviction, and draw our hearts toward God. And He comes for the asking. "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"*

God left not the plan of salvation incomplete. He did not make the blunder of providing a way of escape for untold thousands of blinded souls who had gone "far astray," and

*Luke xi, 13.

furnish no guide to lead them to that way; and the Holy Spirit is the guide He furnished.

Now do you ask how the obduracy of your heart may be removed? We answer, "Pray!" pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit; pray, though your heart is as hard as granite; though you have no more feeling than the pavement beneath your feet. Tell God that you would love him but know not how; that you have a stony heart; that no power has ever been able to move it; that you desire help, that you must have it, that you *mean* to have it. Pray though you feel your case is desperate; and *keep on praying*, for deliverance will come; it *must* come, for it is promised. That hardness will soon begin to relent; desire for God will increase the more you commune with Him, and your melting heart will aspire with the very yearnings you long supposed impossible. Faith will appear more real, and with its exercise love to God will spring forth; and your love will grow; you will then wish to give proof of this new love, and another happy Christian worker will be the result.

It would be unkind to doubt God's willingness to give the Holy Spirit unto eager, fam-

ishing souls, who are suffering under the condemnation of sin, when He has made every other conceivable provision for their welfare in both worlds. Think of the abundance provided for them here. Are they hungry? ten thousand granaries open at their call for food! Are they thirsty? countless gurgling brooks invite them to slake their thirst. Social privileges also are provided; and the beauties of the natural world too, are sufficient, one might suppose, to animate almost any soul. Some, indeed, there are who fail to appreciate these things. Their world is different; their eyes feast upon no starry heavens; no gladsome song-birds, warbling innocently, inspire their sordid souls, for so absorbed are they in grosser things that these escape their notice. But they *exist* for all who will enjoy them and accept the benefits they impart. Above, below, and on every hand, may be found that which, if appreciated, will make us better. We could make no improvement; God has done all things well.

True, there is want in the world, but let no one lay this to God's account or accuse Him of failure to furnish wherewith the requirements

of men might be supplied. Want is the out-growth of another cause, not of God's failure to provide for those He loves. After He had created the world He saw that it was good. Then, for our spiritual and eternal welfare, after man had fallen, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly,"—the richest gift of all. But here are countless souls who know they should avail themselves of the privileges which Christ has purchased for them, and feel they need a guide. Now, would it be doing justice to God's wisdom and benevolence to suppose him capable of refusing this one essential, after he has given everything else? It would be simply absurd! He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Oh, seeker after rest, your prayers are not vain! Pray on! Take God at His word! Let Him not go. You need His Spirit, and He shall be given; and light and hope and love shall fill your soul. Your very desires for salvation were awakened by the Spirit, who, though you have known it not, has begun His work within.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INVITATION GIVEN.

Silence is often golden; and it is usually better to say too little than too much: especially is this true when the defects of others is the theme of conversation. Some advise, "If you cannot say anything good of a man, say nothing." They mean well, though their advice is so absurd as scarcely to require a word of comment. It would cover with the mantle of mistaken charity, deeds of darkness which should be proclaimed upon the housetop, that the defenseless may be aware of the danger to which they are exposed.

Are we to remain silent because no good is known of the deceiver who but lacks opportunity to destroy the happiness of homes whose doors are yet undarkened by the blight of sorrow? Search him out! Proclaim his crime! Raise the warning voice that the unsuspecting may seek and find protection! His place is in the *dungeon*, where he can do no harm; he is a

dangerous man, unfit to move in circles of innocence and respectability. To "say nothing" in such a case is to sin by leaving duty to your neighbor unperformed. But people simply mean that it is better to conceal as far as possible, the defects of others, when to parade them will benefit neither the speaker nor his subject. And this is the spirit of Christianity; to do unto them as we would that they should do to us.

When discussing the virtues of others, we somehow feel more comfortable, and converse with greater freedom. Still pleasanter is it to speak of, and listen to kindly expressions concerning those especially dear to us; and better still to hear directly from them. It pains us when their silence is extended beyond the limit we consider reasonable. We watch the mails with anxious faces and expectant hearts, eager for the letter addressed in that familiar hand; and if it fails to come, our sober faces and listless steps betray the disappointment we cannot easily conceal.

I have known people to lose patience altogether for the time, and to vent their feelings in tempers which were neither pleasant

nor becoming, because provoked that the blameless postman did not deliver the letter they desired. We do not weary of hearing from those we love. If they are present, and from some unknown cause, appear unusually quiet, we ascertain the reason by demanding, "Why don't you say something?" and our last request, when, upon leaving us, they take our hand, and bid good-by, is, *write often*. Again, there are those whose faithfulness is greater than our own, and who betray no impatience at our neglect, nor forget us though unworthy of their changeless affection. Epistles come from them, which are left unanswered; again and again they bring us tidings, but we disregard.

Perhaps it is a praying mother who writes, hoping to reach the heart of her godless son; but she receives no answer. Years pass, yet these messages do not fail to come, and finally, perchance, the heedless youth, weary of the world, and longing for rest, convinced that nothing reaches quite as far as his mother's love, scans with tearful eyes the lines which tell him that he still is welcome, that the old home is open for him, that his favorite room is ready, and that she longs for his return. With remorse

for his neglect, and the resolve that he shall never cause her further sorrow, he starts for home, and is received with open arms.

Dear sinner, there is One whose love surpasses far that of the mother for her wayward boy: "Yea, they may forget," saith the Lord, "yet will not I forget thee."^{*} That Friend is God, and His love has been expressed not only in the sacrifice He made, which is the greatest proof, but also in "line upon line, precept upon precept." He has been writing to you. His epistles, full of love, are almost numberless; but they have been disregarded. There lies your Bible, but you know not what treasures it contains; and I am going to tell you how anxious God is for your return to Him, and how earnestly He has been calling you.

First, God has spoken to the sinner through the Gospel by the word of invitation. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."[†]

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."[‡]

^{*} Isa. xlix, 15. [†] Matt. xi, 28. [‡] Rev. xxii, 17.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."*

But God is not satisfied with simply inviting wanderers to Himself; many, he is aware, fond of argument, waste their time in debating with unbelievers as to whether there be a Christ or not, and whether there is such a thing as forgiveness of sin; now He would have them come to the *proper* person and settle such questions with *Himself*, therefore he also speaks to them by word of expostulation: "Come now, and let us *reason together*, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."† What an act of condescension that the Infinite God should consent to reason with those as insignificant as ourselves. Yet in that very act we behold His determination to save men if there is any possibility of such a thing.

But this is not enough; there are those who refuse to reason with Him, and, regardless of consequences, take the risk of leading sinful

*Isa. iv, 1.

†Isa. i, 18.

lives. Now, that these may understand what they are doing, that the responsibility is their own, that though God has done so much for them they are still unsaved,—as if yet unwilling to leave them to their fate, He speaks to them words of *warning*. Children should yield without the use of unpleasant means, but when they refuse, and danger menaces their welfare, it sometimes becomes necessary to employ severer measures, which even pain the parental heart. So with God. Gladly would He see men turn to Him at the voice of invitation, but if they will not, what must He do? Leave them to perish? Not without a warning word; but in prediction of their coming ruin He declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*

“Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him.”†

Again, He speaks by His providences as truly as through His word. We naturally look upon things that are seen, and wonder, often, why certain misfortunes, dark, mysterious and gloomy, are permitted to visit us, and almost murmur as we observe that while others seem

*Ezek. xviii, 4.

†Isa. iii, 11.

to fare so well, escaping the most grievous ills of life, *we* must be torn by unlooked-for sorrows which we cannot believe are our just desert. How strange, you thought, that the once happy home must be darkened by sorrow and disappointment! that smiles must give place to blinding tears—that life, formerly supplied with luxuries, must become a hand-to-hand struggle with poverty—that your dear ones must be taken at the very time your need of them seemed greatest. Ah! you fail to recognize the voice of the Almighty which comes through the medium of these earth-woes, bidding you sever your affections from the earthly and center them above! But, reader, it is God your Father calling you.

Still further, you are called through the influence of God's Holy Spirit, which comes when you least expect, revealing such pictures of your own sinfulness as startle you. It is with tender feelings you reflect upon the tranquil moments of life, when sin is quiet for the time, and you, alone with God and conscience, are brought to meditate upon the paths your feet have trodden. How wrong they seem! How you fain would turn away from them

and walk in wisdom's ways. How conscious is your need of assistance from above! The tear flows—the sigh is drawn—you resolve to do better:—and there the chapter closes! Again you sin, become careless as before, and all this spiritual exercise is a thing of the past. Oh, why so indifferent to the lessons of those sacred hours? Why thus carelessly return to paths of sin? Wist you not that those influences were imparted by the Holy Spirit? that he was calling you away from sin to God? They were not dreams, nor idle moods to be dismissed at pleasure,—the Spirit of God was calling you! Thus it is that God employs all agencies to call men unto Himself. He speaks through His revealed word, His providences and His Spirit. What more can we expect of Him? If a sinner is lost, it will not be from necessity, but because he *would* not be saved.

Oh, that we might speak in words which will never cease to ring throughout your soul, impress the invitation, and emphasize the warning God has so kindly given! Is not your soul worth saving that you neglect it thus, when it must dwell forever in happiness or woe? when you are evermore to praise the love that sought

you, or lament in bitterest despair, your folly in trifling with the opportunities furnished to you here? Can you not be convinced that you are but opposing Christ in His efforts to extend the kingdom He suffered so to build? Oh, why withstand your truest Friend? Why labor to defeat Him? You need not labor longer; for though *all* arms should be raised in defiance of our God, and all hands be joined in an effort to usurp the Lord's dominion, He still shall reign! and His kingdom shall be established over all.

Will you not then be numbered with the saved, since it is your privilege, and since you understand the way so well? We would see you brought to Christ, dear sinner. For this we are willing to toil and pray. What will be your excuse, if, without salvation, you stand, at the judgment, to receive your reward for the "deeds done in the body?" You cannot say that God has left you without a warning word. You will be unable to plead that "no man cared for your soul;" if you do, I shall remind you of the time you read these words, in which you were besought to give your heart to God, and you will be defenseless and without excuse.

Perhaps you are now awakened, and your cry is, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" Ready, you possibly are, to forsake sin, yet are groaning beneath the weight of past offenses, the memory of which you would *obliterate*, and for which you would now *atone*, but you can do neither! They stand unchanged, in all their blackness; and though your future were to be as spotless as the career of angels who have never sinned, the catalogue of the past is sufficient to sink you to the deepest despair! But, thank God, you need not atone, for another has done this in your stead, and accepting His atonement, that curse rolls away never to afflict you more! Let me point to you the Cross of Christ, stained, as it is with hallowed blood, where the Holy Son of God expires in death! Oh, that sacred Cross of Jesus! why is there so little said of it? and why are burdened sinners kept so long away from the only place where sins and burdens are forever lost? Come and behold it; come kneel before it, and, with your sins, lose all your burdens! Behold the Savior agonizing there, that you might be relieved from suffering and guilt. Listen to His triumph, as, at the last,

He cries, "It is finished," and yields His life! What does it mean? Oh, sinner, it means that the last obstacle is removed; that atonement is made for all the past; that full satisfaction is given for your sins, and that if you will just now by faith accept Him, you will lose your burden and enter into rest.

Then why longer chafe in fetters which need not bind? Why sorrow for what is past? Make good your escape to Jesus while you may! He breaks your fetters; He removes the galling yoke; He makes you free this moment. But *claim your liberty* through our Lord Jesus Christ, and be not "entangled again with the yoke of bondage." We place the responsibility upon you this hour. If you die of hunger, it is in a land where you need but to pluck and eat of the tree of life eternal. If you suffer the agonies of thirst, it is while sitting upon the banks of life's deep river. If you are lost, it will be because you have resisted all the powers of the Infinite; for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are engaged to save you from the second death.

Then stay not away from Christ, dear sinner, for He alone can subdue your iniquities,

and speak the pardoning word; and where will you find rest so long as this weight presses upon your soul? The church may furnish witnesses of God's saving grace, but it is Christ more than the church your soul requires. The society of Christians may afford encouragement and instruction, which is well; but go thou first to Christ without delay! Your soul is tainted with the leprosy that has corrupted the race. The virus is eating out your life, and must be eliminated or you shall be lost! Away, away to Jesus, the Physician who only can cleanse the stains of sin. There is but One who can heal your leprous soul; 'tis Jesus Christ, your Savior, strong to redeem, mighty to save!

Will you then waste time in *preparing* to accept Him? And how shall you prepare? Alas, your life-time you have striven, but to what avail? Is your soul freer from the taint of sin than when you first received the impression that you ought to be a Christian? Not at all; but you know too well that you are further off from heaven. Prepare to come? And where is the leper who can prepare for the cleansing of the prophet? While he delays,

does not the canker eat deeper and further into his flesh? So is it with your sin! the longer retained, the more powerful will be its grasp, until with hopeless wail and despairing voice you cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved."

Or will you worse than waste your opportunities enquiring, with the blinded Pilate, "What is truth?" refusing to see, while the light as the noonday sun is shining for you, debating with unbelievers, arguing as to whether there be a Christ or not? And who ever discovered this by such argument? Not one! Men lose their souls by parleying thus with the friends of Belial. Infidelity is made to clap her hands; the love of many wanes; the ardent believer is confused, and imbibes contamination from the skeptic through argument of this kind, but the tear of penitence is never seen to flow; no hope is inspired of life renewed. Oh, sinner, your soul needs rest, joy and peace. Let them talk as they will, but you are the same—a sinner, wretched, unforgiven. Then why argue with those who are no wiser than yourself, and who can never impart the joys you seek, being themselves

strangers to such joys? They will only harm you. Bid them adieu, and haste to Jesus. Are you in doubt? Would you know what is truth? Then come and make the trial for yourself. If Christ be a myth, you have naught to lose, but if He is indeed the Savior of the world, so richly shall you prove it that all your doubts will be dispelled.

Or will you still delay, hoping for a more convenient season? Any season shall be convenient, if in that season rest be given. Better that a thorn be withdrawn at once, though by an unskillful hand, than that it be permitted to imbitter future days. Better that the vile weed be taken from the soil while small, than that it remain to grow and multiply, and destroy the garden-bed. And it were better that sin be removed *to-day*, though the season seem most unsuitable, than that it be left to darken all your future.

A more convenient season? Away with such absurdity! Does the sinking mariner refuse a plank, hoping for a better chance for life? It were folly, madness! The case is similar. Your soul's interest is at stake. Time is passing. You may never have another call.

Your opportunity is good; will you improve it or let it pass? Consider well, for God is looking on; and know that if you remain unsaved, you are responsible. Your calamity, when it cometh, must be borne by you alone. Oh, think of your danger, and how easily it might be averted! Ponder well the path you tread, and consider upon how small a pivot your whole future turns, of weal or woe! It would be no task to swallow the arsenic, so harmless in appearance, upon the silver spoon; but how difficult to escape the effects! One might easily drop a firebrand into the powder magazine, but the explosive results, the ruin, the loss of life, who could repair? And it would not be hard to quench the Spirit and say to the Savior who now so gently knocks at your heart's door, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a *convenient season* I will call for Thee." But the result of your folly might cause eternal regret.

You may be saved at some future time; the "convenient season" for which you wait possibly will come, for God is merciful; but though it should, and you be made happy in God's love, you never could be as noble a

Christian as you may, by obeying the present call. God forgives the worst, saves the "chief of sinners," and sometimes at the eleventh hour; but they cannot be what they might have been, had they yielded early to the call, before wasting so many years in the pleasures and indulgences of iniquity.

Sinner, you are called to-day; what are you going to do? May God, who has revealed to you your duty, assist you to perform it! Seek God! Seek Him now! Find Him at any cost! for your need of Him is the most imperative need of all! Let nothing prevent!

You prove, in common with those about you, the weakness of the race, the inability of yourself to attain unto that ideal of spiritual excellence portrayed to your mind; you know the humiliating defeats to which you have been subjected a hundred times after your most faithful effort, and can expect nothing better in the future; therefore, in the name of reason let me ask, why longer hold your position in a fortress which must be taken and demolished? Why continue to tremble at the thought of an expected enemy who is to take you captive and render you his slave? Escape for your

life, for the enemy approaches fast! He is frightfully near; he has discovered your hiding-place, and, greedy for your life, brandishes the weapon with which he would smite you with eternal death! Escape while an opportunity is given, before each avenue is forever closed, and you are left a victim to the fell destroyer! If there were hope in your defense, I would not urge you. But you are hopeless; self-confidence is madness; the enemy is mightier than you, and you will prove an easy prey! Then *escape to Christ*, from your citadel of carnal security! Hasten, for why will you die?

CHAPTER VII.

THE INVITATION ACCEPTED.

Memory is an ever-open volume into which we may look at pleasure, and investigate treasures that have been stored so safely there, that none are able to deprive us of them. They may destroy our libraries, burn our homes with fire, and appropriate our gold; but memory stands by us still, and we have only to look within to draw upon a treasury as imperishable as the immortal soul. Forgetfulness, as the term is commonly employed, does not imply the annihilation of memory, but simply a suspension of it. Nothing is forgotten in the absolute sense of the term.

Events which transpired years ago, and which we supposed had long since passed into oblivion, are often pictured before us by memory with freshness and power, as we are brought back to the places and scenes where they occurred; and many tell us that the memories

of early life are more vivid than those of later years. It may be so with some of my readers; you can distinctly remember the occurrences of by-gone years, but many of the more recent have already passed temporarily from your minds.

Now, your lives are busy, characterized by many changes; you are jostled by business duties, domestic labors and social demands, so that it would not be at all surprising if you had failed of retaining some of the lessons already learned, upon which you ought to ponder. Possibly in the foregoing chapters, truths, long unthought of, have been brought to your attention, which you should not permit the numerous activities of life again to crowd into forgetfulness; yet, lest there should be danger of this, we will take a brief review.

If some thoughts must be dismissed from your minds, let them be those relating to this world and the present life, but not to your eternal interests. Forget (if you can) your business reverses, domestic trials, and social difficulties, for it will not relieve you to brood over them; but remember what we have been endeavoring to bring to your attention; for if

you heed these warnings and accept the invitation given, the benefit derived will have little more than commenced to appear when trouble, business and perplexities have passed from your experience to afflict you no more forever.

You have been reminded of wants which have existed many years—that you need to be at peace with God and conscience; that you should have the consolation which can be found alone in Christian experience; that merely an intellectual knowledge of God is insufficient; and that whether you are conscious or unconscious of the fact, these wants still exist, and the plea of unconsciousness furnishes no remedy. You have been assured that for all these wants there is a plentiful supply; that though the waters of the ocean could never cleanse your sin, there is, nevertheless, “a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.” You have been told also how this supply may be rendered available in your own case; how, that by a simple act of faith, in which you believe and *accept* the testimony of God’s love for you through Jesus Christ, the riches of the Infinite may virtually be made your own. And you have, moreover, been invited to come without

delay and take God at His word, that the power of saving grace may appear in you.

What now remains but for you to accept this invitation and enter into rest? How, indeed, can you refuse to accept? What argument will you bring by which to prove your innocence in delaying, and convince those who seek your soul's salvation that they are wrong and you are right? I think you will agree with me that such an argument cannot be brought; and that if you are to be true to your Maker, your friends and yourself, you will accept without delay.

Now, we cannot think, kind reader, that you will be untrue; we will not believe such a thing of you, but must conclude that since you are convinced that it is your duty to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and dedicate yourself to the service of God, you will *do so at once*, claiming Him as yours in return.

As the sunbeam on a cloudless morning, stealing through the window into the chamber where the sufferer lies, who, through the tedious hours of darkness, wistfully looked for dawn—as the stillness of the air which soothes to rest the maddened billows where the storm-

driven mariner is wearied by continued watching—as the luxury of abundance to him whose willing hands have toiled unceasingly, but only received for their reward a scant supply of bread—as the restfulness of relief after an agony of pain—so is the whisper of forgiveness to the penitent who has sought with sorrow the favor of his God.

The darkness has vanished, the pain has departed, the storm has ceased, the labor is ended and there is rest. He has found his place at last—his resting-place in Christ; the “secret place of the Most High,” of which prophets spoke;—a home in Christ! and he abides “under the shadow of the Almighty.” Now he is at peace, for he has found repose in Jesus. Pleasure could delight, but failed to satisfy. Beauty might charm, but his soul hungered still; for he was estranged from God, and while that estrangement endured, there was a lack, and nothing could relieve but a return to Him. He *has* returned now, and the lack no longer distresses him. The hunger is satisfied, the thirst is quenched, and a new life opens before him, with richer beauties, loftier aspirations and brighter prospects. He

may have lived for self before; he cannot now. His treasure is with God, and where one's "treasure is" there will his "heart be also."

He never could understand, in former years, what claim God had upon his time and energy, but to-day he realizes that he is not his own; that he has been "bought with a price;" and he seeks to "glorify God in his body and spirit which are God's." He is well assured that no return rendered by his most faithful effort will repay his Heavenly Father for the sacrifice He has made; nor does he hope ever to be able to do this; but the least he *can* do is to dedicate his powers to God's service; and this he does with gladness, thankful that his offering is accepted. His time, talent, voice, property, education, opportunities, and whatever he may hold at his disposal, are employed in a continued effort to further the cause of his Redeemer. His heart is filled with gratitude which finds expression in labors of love. He is forgiven, and no fear of pending calamity now disturbs him.

He formerly labored under incessant condemnation, for he was a transgressor; and the merciless law of justice which tolerates no

delinquencies, kept by his side wherever he went, to arrest the most trivial disobedience, and assign to him the just penalty of his sin. He might endeavor to yield obedience to the law's demands, but with a polluted nature how could he fulfill a perfect law? Yet it *must be fulfilled* or his fate is to be eternal death. Oh, wretched man! His best attempts are spurned, and this ever-present companion at his side sentences him to the punishment awaiting all who sin against God. He is helpless and speechless, for conscience asserts that all the law affirms is right, and he has no defense to make.

But still the law, reminding him of his evil deeds, unholy thoughts, and sinful words, declares, "You have offended me, you have transgressed, you have been a wicked man. I must take you to your punishment; you deserve to die, and die you must, for I commanded you not to sin and you have disobeyed. Talk not of mercy; if you desired to be saved why did you not obey? It is too late now. You have sinned; and though from this time you should be perfect, you have already committed sin enough to condemn you to

eternal death. Come, no more delay; your time has expired! you must die!" And with determined grasp he lays hold upon the helpless one to execute his threat.

But in accepting the atonement of Jesus Christ, justice is satisfied, and the guilty one's days of bondage are ended. No longer is he speechless, for, with his Savior close beside him he calmly faces the accuser of his past life, while he replies, "You speak the truth, most excellent Law of God. You tell me I have sinned, and it is so; it cannot be denied. You say that you must be obeyed. I know it, and have tried my utmost, but have failed. Yet, by my side is One who has fulfilled it instead of me. You sentence me to death, but Jesus Christ has died for me;" and, bidding him look upon the Savior, he continues, "See the prints of the nails in these sacred hands and feet! Behold where the sword pierced him to the heart! What have you now to say? I desire to know the worst!" But the Law is speechless! and with triumphant voice the sinner saved exclaims, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but

after the Spirit." "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Oh, precious Savior! what wondrous mercy hast Thou shown to helpless, dying sons of men! Oh, gracious Father, how shall we understand the love which makes us children of the Eternal King? We do not expect to, here. Thy chosen and inspired one who lived so near to Thee, and who wrote as no one else wrote, the story of Thy love, could not understand it; and we would simply pause in wonder with him, as in astonishment he exclaims, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" But the fact remains! Accepting Christ by faith, we become the children of God! for He saith that He "will be a Father" unto us, and that we shall be His "sons and daughters."

Now, the children of God may reasonably expect certain favors at His hands, and feel that they hold special claim upon Him as their Father. A man may love everybody, but he certainly thinks more of his own children than of others. And though God is love, desiring that "all should come to repentance," the par-

ticular manifestation of that love will always be revealed in peculiar blessings upon those who have obeyed Him. To them is ever extended the richest tokens of His favor.

We should expect *support* from Him. No kind father would see his child want bread, if it were within his power to supply it; and though he may require him to put forth an exertion to obtain it, the father will not withhold it long enough to induce more suffering than is best for the child. He may put him to the test occasionally, in order to prove the genuineness of his faith; but when he is convinced that his child's trust is unquestionable, when the child says, "Father, I am not uneasy, I know you love me and will give what I need"—when the child thus confides, the father will bestow with liberal hand. God often deals thus with His beloved. A little more child-faith blended with our labors, and not quite so much uneasiness about food and clothing, will be attended with happier results.

Then, we should expect *defense* from God. Any father who would see his child suffer undeserved violence at the hands of wicked men who were beneath his control, and offer

no protection nor defense, lacks one of the elements of true manhood, and is a coward. If there is one thing above any other that brings the hot blood to the father's cheek, the flash of fire to his eye, the feeling of just indignation to his heart and Herculean strength to his arm, it is to see his innocent and helpless loved one who confides implicitly in his power, and dwells without a fear beneath the shelter of his roof, subjected to the imposition of the vile. Though he be rendered penniless, though he suffer loss of friends, reputation, and everything he once held dear, in his attempt to procure the safety of his own, they all must go! but he will do this at any cost! "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you He will avenge them speedily." *

This is a world of evil, and God's children must maintain their integrity amid countless opposing elements. Among these are: The strife of tongues, the jealousy of the malicious, the cruelty of the wicked, and the pain which those inflict who strive, by unfair representa-

* Luke xviii, 7, 8.

tion, to blacken deeds which are white as driven snow ! They darken counsel ; they sting with cutting words ; they wither with the whisperings of hatred. "What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue ? Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."† But let not the child of God be greatly moved. Let him be calm, for his defense is sure. Let him seek shelter in his God until the storm be overpast. His integrity shall be made to appear, and all his enemies shall be put to shame.

But one of the most exalted privileges a child can claim, one which is destined to influence his entire future and prove to be the surest protection against the vices and errors of ignorance, is that of receiving instruction at his parent's hand. Our greatest men, whose lives have been given to bless the world, confess that much of their usefulness is due to training and instruction imparted by devoted parents whose memory they revere. Parents often forget to how large a degree the success of their children is dependent upon their faithfulness in this regard. And many a life which

† Ps. cxx, 3, 4.

might have contributed largely to the happiness of others, has been shattered by a tempest which, under other conditions, could not have shaken it.

God never forgets these things; but knowing how great will be the need that the newborn soul receive strength against such storms as are sure to rage, invites His child to make a confidant of his Father, and says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye".* And Christ, who has come to be the Christian's unfailing companion, offers *His* assistance, saying, "Learn of me."† Dear reader, do you realize the privilege these words extend to you? Of learning of Christ, of sitting at His feet, of beholding His spotless life, of following His example and thus becoming transformed into His image? Ah, this is a privilege which renders life unspeakably blessed! this is the crowning excellence. Poets may speak of the moon's silvery light and nature's matchless landscapes; happy hearts may sing of love's inseverable cords; but to learn of Jesus and tell of One whose presence fills the soul with joy

*Ps. xxxii., 8. †Matt. xi, 29.

unspeakable and full of glory, whose name is the sweetest music that ever came to mortal ear,—this is the greatest privilege of all; and it belongs to the believer, for Jesus said, “Learn of Me.”

But what can He have to teach us in this age of culture and advancement? Our land abounds in universities and colleges of high grade. The press has also become a power in the world. One may obtain knowledge if he will, provided that no unusual impediment forbid; then what necessity is there for another teacher?

Go to the halls of learning, ye who thirst for knowledge. Study with diligence, you will have need of all that you can acquire, for the age is one of progress. Spend years of time and all necessary means that you may secure the coveted instruction. Come forth, diploma in hand, and bring honors won by your deserving effort. But as you listen to the voices raised in applause of your undisputed ability, and as you proceed to commingle with the world whose smile or frown you now feel prepared to meet, remember there are lessons you still need to know, and which will secure to you the largest

success both in this world and the next. One other Teacher remains, who alone can meet the wants of your still unsatisfied soul. That Teacher is Christ the Lord; and He addresses you this day. Listen, oh, listen to His voice, for He saith "Learn of Me."

What, then, has Christ to teach? Not philosophy, science or mathematics; He leaves such things to others, and proceeds to impart heart-lessons which shape the whole life and walk of him who learns them. There is the lesson of *meekness*, an attribute which, He asserts, is a characteristic of Himself. "I am meek and lowly in heart." "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously." "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb so He openeth not His mouth." And He wishes to teach *you* the lesson of meekness. Oh, child of God, be teachable, for you will require this virtue throughout life's pilgrimage. If anger and impatience gain the mastery, life will prove a failure. Here science avails nothing. But

Christ will teach you to be "meek and lowly in heart."

There is also the lesson of *implicit* trust in Him. Although the child of God had faith when he accepted Christ, that faith was crude, and the soul required training, that amid the future storms of life his trust might never fail. I have seen a mother teaching her little one to walk; he can already take a few steps, but that he may walk on just a little further, she moves backward, withholding her assistance, as further and further she recedes, only to be followed by the little trembling form; and when the mother is satisfied at the effort of her child, she hastens to its relief and folds it to her heart. Christ would teach His children to walk by faith. They are already able to move a little distance, but He would lead them to trust Him further still, and oftentimes withholds from them that special feeling upon which they are so prone to place dependence, that they may walk by faith alone: but always extends His hand to aid, when they have gone far enough to derive benefit from the lesson given.

It would require little struggle to be a Christian if the way were always smooth—if

temptation, sorrow and affliction were unknown;—but where is the life so unruffled that these do not appear? It does not exist! they are sure to come in one form or another, and we must be prepared to meet them. Said a young Christian, “The trouble is, I do not *stay* saved:” and that is a common complaint. And why? The answer is, fluctuating faith where confidence in God should be immovable. If the needle varied in its position and failed to point unwaveringly to the pole, but turned at one hour to the east, the next to the south, what could the mariner do? There would be no certainty to his course, but he must live in constant danger of shipwreck. Many Christians fail to realize that wavering faith should be disallowed. They sin and wonder why; they are in darkness and are amazed; their joys depart, and they search for the reason night and day: but all the while, they are looking at self, at the billows surging about them, instead of trusting Jesus moment by moment; and, like sinking Peter, they, naturally enough, also begin to sink. But Christ is able to save them always, just as well as but half the time; and will, if they permit Him.

There is still another heart-lesson Christ would teach to those whom He has pardoned. It is the lesson of that charity which covereth "the multitude of sins." Meekness, Faith and Love!—Blest lessons! We cannot know them too well. Usually, it is not difficult to love in return those who love us. Almost every one does as much. Yet Christ would impress the most difficult lesson of all.

"Learn of *Me*," said Christ. Let us behold Him that we may learn of Him. Whom did He love so dearly? A world in sin! He healed the wounded soldier who came to capture Him. He saved the dying thief! He gave His life for those who cursed Him. He loved His *enemies*; and His command is, "*Learn of Me*." As I sacrifice for sinners, go thou and do the same. As I forgive my foes, go and do thou likewise. As I labor for the fallen, do thou also labor for them! Reader, have you learned this lesson? Alas, many leave it forever unlearned. But if you would be unspeakably happy, if you would know the secret of peace and holy rest, learn this lesson of love?

What can stand before love? Convince an erring brother that you love him, and you have gained that brother. Take him by the hand when he has done his worst to injure you, saying, I love you! causing him to *feel* it, and, unless the case be unusually desperate, he will relent. The coals of fire will burn him; his head will bow with shame and he will ask, "What does it mean?"—"A hard saying," I am told. Truth; but let me here reveal one secret, which, if proven, will be of incalculable benefit to your life. These hard sayings of Scripture, these crossing commands of Christ, when fulfilled by us, are attended with the richest blessings. Do you doubt it? Then make the trial for yourself; you will find it even so.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWS.

Some children are very good, but slow to learn. After the tasks of brothers and sisters have been completed, and the latter have gone to join their companions on the play-ground, these, less fortunate, obedient to the mandate of their governess, must spend more time in poring over lessons which seem beyond their comprehension. Yet frequently these are the children who finally excel. They are slow but sure, and when a lesson is mastered, there is no further trouble with it. They cannot help their natural dullness, but toil on faithfully, until, after years of exposure to the mortification attending the consciousness of inferior talent, they awaken to their need of still more faithful application, and stimulated by the rising pride so common and praiseworthy in the youthful heart, which spurns the thought of defeat, with the habits of study now so well established, they begin to move forward with

rapid strides, till at last they stand at the front and take the honors of their class. (Those children who are both bright and faithful, and those both stupid and careless, we will not mention, as all know the results of their respective habits.) But, in contrast with the class first mentioned, who, though not naturally brilliant, by unremitting application turn out well, there is another class of children, brighter far, no doubt, who are less faithful. With the self-assurance awakened by repeated displays of intellectual ability they suppose themselves entitled to hours of leisure while others still are busy. Thus they become careless in their habits, and discover, when it is too late, that their wasted opportunities are gone forever, and have carried with them the laurels which might have been their unquestioned reward.

And not only are they unfaithful in their studies, but develop characteristics which become a source of untold pain to their parents, and trouble to themselves. They desire to have their own way, and cannot be convinced that the "old folks" know what is best for them as well as they themselves know. They hardly should be termed wicked at heart, for they

would not intentionally wound the feelings of their parents, but for all that, they are constantly doing so.

On one occasion they insist upon going out to spend the evening, regardless of their mother's request that they remain at home; then they speak carelessly of an esteemed, but old-fashioned friend of their father's, who is worthy, though clad in quaint attire. Further than this, they murmur at the routine of home-life, and become uneasy, as though desirous of leaving their happy home to see the world. They also neglect many of the duties which form their share of the household burden, and love to be off spending leisure hours with those who are like-minded with themselves.

All such developments as these, while not to be punished with expulsion from home, or regarded as criminal to their characters as children, are, nevertheless, painful beyond expression to the parents, and if not restrained, will terminate disastrously, perhaps in disgrace. Such children should be taken in hand, or they will beyond doubt go speedily to ruin. And great care and wisdom must be exercised by

the parents in their endeavor to correct, lest this ruin be hastened rather than prevented.

God has many children of this kind. They may have been exceedingly bright at first, giving promise to become mighty in the cause of truth; they ran well for a season, but have, in some way, begun to grow careless, as though they now believed themselves to be so far advanced in Christian experience that they are warranted in taking certain liberties, and living very much as they desire; when the truth is, they are but babes, requiring to be fed "with milk, and not with meat," being yet unable to bear it. There is a certain degree of love to God, a degree of faith, also; but they are losing rather than gaining, and bid fair, if they continue thus, to make "shipwreck" of faith and a good conscience.

It is surprising how some of God's children are content to live; how they go stumbling along over present privileges and opportunities, with their eyes fastened upon some enchanted pathway, which, from its distance, appears beautiful and pleasant, with boulders, thorns and briars necessarily out of sight, while instead of this, they should be "taking heed" lest they

fall by the hand of a foe, who, at their *very side* watches to perpetrate some deed of death. Now, such conduct as this on the part of God's beloved, besides working injury to themselves, is a dishonor and grief to the One who has conferred upon them so great a kindness as to make them His own children. To be careless is to esteem His commands lightly, which is a reproach. Yet how the family of God is afflicted by members who well know the way of life, understand what is expected of them as children, but assume the responsibility of disobeying their Father in a hundred different ways.

We shall notice, in this chapter, the manner in which this is done, by referring to a limited number of inconsistencies such as may be observed in almost any Christian community. First, it is done by carelessness in conversation. There is among us an evil which is becoming so familiar that it is escaping our notice, but which is, nevertheless, quenching the Spirit of God. It creeps into circles of spiritual power and disturbs the peaceful soul. It is often embraced by leaders of the armies of Israel. We find it among spiritual instructors, and it is

all the more dangerous on that account. Among our young people it exists to a wonderful extent: I mean the habit of uttering *idle words*. Some call it fun, others, white-lying. I believe it to be a cause for alarm to every true Christian and an unquestionable conformity to the world.

I am sorry for the man, who, in his own estimation, has become too pious to smile, in this world so full of sad hearts and heavy burdens. Not one joy would we take from the most buoyant spirit. I would bid the merry to rejoice, and increase the sunshine of life by all legitimate means; but pleasantry is one thing, folly quite another. It is not necessary to do wrong in order to be witty. We need not speak falsely that we may display to others our brilliancy, and if we can do so in no other way, it were better that they should consider us too prosy for their society.

It is always gratifying to hear young people challenging each other's wit and retaliating in all the sprightliness of youth, when this is done without compromising conscience and truth. But it is painful to listen to anything of this kind when, for an hour's merriment, principle

and right are sacrificed. Yet so common has this custom become that in many cases, parties professing to be Christians can scarcely converse for an hour without introducing phrases which shock the conscientious listener. This is one of the shadows which sometimes darken the young Christian's path. You will never be as well satisfied with yourself, and no one of sound sense will consider that you are a whit more clever for employing idle words to express your sentiments. The world may not condemn the use of idle words, but you have "come out from the world;" and can you be gratified in the employment of such expressions as bring smiles to the faces of the ungodly, while the dear Lord is pained to see how you partake of the spirit of the world? You will not find the *fully* consecrated thus engaged, but those of *shallow* Christian experience only.

Another shadow, and one still deeper, is the habit of uttering *harmful* words; not intentionally, it may be, but carelessly. Yet let us remember that God is looking on. Each moment He is watching us. If we could bear in mind that he is always near, listening to our words and observing our conduct, what a dif-

ference would mark our walk! But He *is*, whether we remember it or not. When, seated at the daily board, you, in conversation, pass your judgment upon others, He is listening, and passing judgment upon you. As you enter the neighbor's home to spend an hour in friendly visitation, and express your convictions as to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of another, He is there and hears it all. So be careful that what you say is positively true, and that no defect in the other's character is displayed with more color than is charitable. If it becomes necessary to speak of inconsistencies, defend the truth, and God will bless you; otherwise they had better remain unmentioned. Be kind; and remember, "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." How few are guiltless at this point! It is so easy to talk, and irreparable harm is done ere the speaker is aware.

Impatience also is frequently displayed by those whose piety stands unquestioned. I have known devout men in the church whose absence is always deplored, men who would sacrifice all their earthly possessions rather than to be found guilty of dishonest conduct, and who stand before the people as examples of

Christian integrity, to so far forget the claims of God and society upon them, as to yield, under but slight provocation, to tempers not at all becoming to the followers of Christ. They astonished those who had regarded them as models of consistent behavior, and, upon due reflection, were themselves so mortified by this rash conduct, that they were heartily ashamed to appear before those who had reason to expect better things of them. But their sorrow and unfeigned penitence for the momentary departure from the right way, gave ample proof that they were loyal at heart, though they had thus offended on the impulse of an unguarded moment. Yet they *did wrong*, for they were children of God, and had no liberty to display such a spirit. It was hurtful to the cause so dear to them, and liable to engender carelessness in those who naturally looked to them for example; for if these established Christians can be justified in so doing, what cause for alarm will the inexperienced need have at the thought of *their* inconsistencies?

There is more impatience among believers than we could wish to credit, as, on the Sabbath they assemble in their best spirits and

apparel to do honor to God's holy day. Could we but accompany them to their abodes, and remain with them throughout one short week, what lessons would we learn of their fallibility! Though they to-day nobly refute the charge of a lifeless profession, we would nevertheless see that they do sometimes yield to impatience.

Christians frequently assume the responsibility of indulging in *doubtfulness*, also. Not that glaring unbelief, so harmful to the child of God, which permits him to deny his Lord, but a vague uncertainty as he enters the labyrinths of mystery connected with his experience, causing him to tremble lest the Master had forgotten him, and left him to extricate himself without divine assistance. Forgetting the faithfulness of his Savior, who said, "Lo, I am with you alway," and that his duty is but to follow, without questioning the wisdom of the guide, he becomes fearful (it would seem) that the latter had mistaken the way, and as he now finds himself in deeper sorrow than has ever enshrouded his life, thinks he will spend a little time in doubting, and enquires, "How is this? When I gave my heart to God, I supposed that 'all things' were going to 'work

together for good,' and that I was to be so sheltered that no storm could harm; but here I am, worse off than ever." His agony becomes intense. His fear to meet this unlooked-for trial almost unmans him, and he wonders why God has forsaken him. The plain assurances of God's word, the evidence, so unmistakable, by which he knew that he was accepted as God's child, the peace which replaced condemnation, the countless expressions of God's favor,—all these seem insufficient to convince him; but now that God simply desires to test the graces given, by concealing Himself for a season, he must needs doubt His mercy, and work himself into an agony of torture, instead of resting upon the promises until the trial be past and God declares, "It is enough," and is convinced that His child is determined to trust Him, come what will, as Abraham did, who believed God to be reasonable, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary. What blessings were showered upon the patriarch's head in acknowledgment of that wonderful faith! "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in

blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies." And what blessings always attend the faithfulness of His children now, as their voices are heard above the loudest tempest, crying, "Lord, I believe!" and could we but realize the victories lost, the weaknesses entailed, the hours of depression occasioned by our doubtfulness during times of trial, we would resolve from this hour not to doubt, though the heavens fall! What folly it is to doubt when God's word stands pledged! What more need we than this? A little feeling? a little sight? just enough to convince us of God's notice? We have enough for this, unless we believe Him to be false, for He has said that "the very hairs of our head are all numbered," and that He "will never leave nor forsake us." Yet many very good people, whose standing in the church and in the estimation of all is excellent, often find to their dismay that their faith is weaker than they supposed it to be; and are chagrined to confess that they also must be numbered among those who doubt. They thought themselves

beyond that danger, and regarded it impossible for them thus to offend ; but alas ! they knew not how hot the purifying furnace was to be heated ; and though the Lord brought them safely through, their garments, at least, were singed.

Keeping pace with this spirit of doubtfulness, and walking hand in hand with it, is that of *fearfulness*. Strange words these are, to be applied to "soldiers of the Cross" and children of the Eternal King ; yet let those who have never felt the force of them justify themselves. They are few, while the number smitten with conscious fault is great. Said a young man of moral habits and standing, as we together walked home from a religious meeting, "It would be a good thing if I could go off among strangers where I am unknown, and make a start in the Christian life, and when I have become established, so that I shall not be afraid to meet my friends, return and demonstrate the genuineness of my conversion by a devoted life." My greatest apprehension for one who will thus endeavor to get religion on the sly, lest people will know of it and subject him to more or less reproach, is, that he never will become estab-

lished; at least, so long as possessed by such a spirit. If religion is worth seeking at all, it is worth seeking in a manly way, and will never be found until it is sought thus.

But the conduct of this young man is suggestive of a fear, far less culpable, of course, yet almost as marvelous, on the part of many who did not run away to find the Savior, but who, discovering that He was not far from them, but even at their heart's door, quietly opened that door and let Him in. I say "quietly," for so still were they over the matter, and so careful have they since been to avoid whatever would be likely to draw attention to the fact, that their special friends alone know anything about it. Now, while all cannot be revivalists or ministers, confession of Christ should be regarded as a privilege when fitting opportunity is presented. The Master will ever acknowledge such confession with His smile of approval and the special manifestation of His presence within. He awaits to comfort hearts, who, by their fearfulness of such friends as would only honor their confession, will not give Christ the opportunity to bless them. There may be such a thing as quieting conscience by

striving to convince ourselves that the whole duty has been performed when it is but half done, yet it would be far better for us to permit conscience to have its way (if there be any contention) than for us to have ours. The mistake will manifest itself somewhere, at some time, and in some way: if not in utter failure, at least in weakness where there should be strength. There is something imperative in Christ's words, "Ye also shall bear witness,"* nor can we disregard them without suffering accordingly.

I have known professors to act as though confessing Christ before men were very much like taking a dose of unpleasant medicine; they seemed glad when the ordeal was over, and hoped never to be compelled to suffer another. But there is no call for such feelings as these. Probably no one will hurt you for confessing your faith, and if any should feel so disposed, never mind—better confess, just the same, and count it a joy to suffer for Jesus' sake. He was not restrained by fear of pain in His sacrifice for us, and if "that mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus," delight shall

* Jno. xv., 27.

accompany the thought of doing whatever we know will please Him best, even though it be to suffer for His sake.

Another fear, and one which is very harassing in its nature, afflicts many of God's children who should be resting in His faithfulness to perform what He has promised. It is, that they will not hold out, and, by their failure, reproach the cause they love; and they console themselves that this lack of confidence is modesty, while in reality it supposes the probability of unfaithfulness somewhere, either on God's part or theirs. No more certain is the law of cause and effect than the promise of reward to him who is loyal to his God. Now, if we fear failure, we presume either that we shall prove recreant or that God will leave His promise unfulfilled; for failure can come only as the result of one of these two causes. As God cannot fail, the responsibility falls back upon us, and our fear *must* be that, in some way, we will retract. But the very idea of this should be excluded from our remotest thought. What would you think of the husband who was constantly tortured with the fear that perhaps he would some day prove untrue to the

one who had forsaken all for him? You would declare that his profession of regard had been too hasty; that he had run a frightful risk in asking so much at another's hands, before he was sure that he desired it; that his affection was too shallow: and you would declare the truth. He should have been so certain, before assuming such responsibility, that the fear now distressing him could not exist: no, not even its shadow; and his rashness has shattered, beyond recovery, the earthly prospects of two lives.

And how must it grieve our God to feel that the affection professed by His beloved is so uncertain that they fear some day to betray it! Fearfulness is a dark shadow which often proves to be a source of untold discomfort and perplexity to the Christian, and which can only be dispelled by the light, strength and warmth of a *perfect love*.

A stranger to religion, noting only the shadows here enumerated, might almost be brought to a pause of indecision, not knowing whether to choose the world or Christ (if he were taught to believe these shadows necessary, which, of course, is not the case), yet the

catalogue is still incomplete. Another cloud, no larger than a man's hand at first, but which often spreads until it covers the whole face of the spiritual heavens, sometimes veils the sunshine from the Christian's heart. It is anxious care, better known as *worry*. There is plenty in this world to trouble those who will permit themselves to be disturbed by trifles; and where the lesson of self-mastery is not thoroughly learned, fretfulness and anxiety are sure to abound. People of great responsibility necessarily have much with which they must contend; but leaving them, and entering the quietest abodes, where one would think perplexity could find no footing, we listen to the same story of troubled minds and careworn hearts. It seems that people must worry about somebody or something, and if no other cause can be found, they will worry about themselves.

This will answer for the world, where the whole attention is given to considering present needs, but when we come to Christians, better things are expected. We expect that victory is attending them during this earthly journey; that these temporal concerns rest lightly

upon their hearts, for they have independent resources upon which they rely, so that it does not matter so much as might be supposed whether worldly success or failure attends them. If they do well, they, of course, are thankful; but if otherwise, they know God will protect them in some way, and though they would be pleased with more of the good things of this life, if it might be so, since it cannot, they are going to be happy without them. This is what men expect of Christians:—that they have cheerful, contented, grateful and happy spirits; hearts reconciled to all unavoidable misfortune, and indifferent to such advantages as cannot be made available; thankful dispositions, always looking on the bright side of things, seeking cause for cheerfulness when it is not easy to be found, never complaining when prospects are dark, but giving thanks that they are no worse. This is what men have a right to expect of Christians, for it is nothing more than they should exhibit; but, alas! those who expect such things are often sadly disappointed; for worry and unrest frequently afflict believers. Oh, ye members of God's family who read these lines, have you not many times

had reason to respond, "That is so"? Faithful in prayer, abundant in labors, tender in conscience, careful in daily walk, possessing every badge of discipleship, yet worried still! Troubled, notwithstanding the command "Let not your heart be troubled;" burdened, when it is written "Cast thy burden upon the Lord;" anxious, though Christ commanded "Take no thought;" and wearied with care, as though we had not been told to be "careful for nothing" (with such anxious, unnecessary care, of course, as distresses and afflicts): What does it all mean? and what must the world think of Christians who endure the ills of life little better than themselves? There must be something wrong. It is time for self-examination. God's commands are not meaningless. Not one of us would lie or steal or swear, yet how is it that we assume the right to bear a load of care while he commands, "Be careful for nothing"? Ah, we walk beneath a shadow, while the sunshine of God's love is filling ten thousand souls with glory! It is time for us to get into the light, for God awaits to bless us also.

But this is enough on shadows. Idle and harmful words, impatience, doubt, fear and

anxious care. What a list! Something must be done, for it would be exceedingly unprofitable to worry through a long and tedious pilgrimage of this kind, trusting that death will furnish happy relief. Such is not God's design. Provision for a far better life on earth is made. The only question to determine is, "Shall we have victory, or thus plod on?" We do not accuse *all* our readers of walking beneath shadows. Let those of you whose happy experiences refute such accusation rejoice, for God has done great things for you; but let others, whose speaking consciences whisper that we have declared *truth*, not fiction, remember that *you* are meant; and may the blessed Spirit so work upon your hearts, that no consideration shall be able to induce you longer to tolerate such impediments to your development.

CHAPTER IX.

SUNSHINE.

Could we for a moment forget all unhappy experiences of the past, become oblivious of what we have learned throughout years of sad reality, and look out upon the beauty of a perfect morning in June, with nature decked in garlands of living green, it would be difficult for us to believe there is anything wrong in this delightful world, that aught exists to mar the joys of the favored dwellers here. Everything seems anxious to relate its story of purity, peace and gladness. From the zephyr, stirring the treetops, comes a whisper of praise to God and good-will to man. It greets us gently, kindly, as if to say, "There is no sorrow here."

The music from ten thousand songsters also contributes a convincing argument to nature's joyousness. We listen to the chorus in which each warbler vies with its happy mate, as if desirous of excelling in the blissful praise-song, having more of gratitude than can be expressed through his dainty throat. We

catch the inspiration of the hour, and, as we witness such undoubted happiness throughout the summer's day, and listen to the evening strain as the music falls faintly on the air, like a long sigh for more time to offer praise to God, and the warblers sink away to rest, to be protected by the Father who careth for the sparrows, we muse and say, "Surely there is no sorrow here."

And when the song is hushed, and nature is wrapped in the embrace of sleep, when the curtains of night have enveloped the world, and the stars have crept from their hiding-places, as if to guard the helpless slumberers from unseen foes, and the dome of nature presents to our vision a picture surpassing the beauty of earth, we are impressed with the reign of peace. From the breeze, birds and skies we are taught of innocence, obedience and happiness, and we would close the scene while yet 'tis fair. But another picture is presented; one which modifies our joys by depressing our hearts with sadness. The memory of what we have seen and known of human trial, suspended only for a moment, again flashes vividly before us.

Man is vile, and full of sorrow! God's *lesser* works are innocent; His *greatest* one is defaced, corrupted, ruined! With pain we turn from these pleasant lessons of nature, to meet a reality we fain would disbelieve. But alas it is too true! Sing, bright warblers, your most plaintive notes! sing softly, sadly; for man has fallen! Sigh, gentle zephyrs, whispering through the tree-tops! sigh mournfully, yet sigh your sympathy, for man has fallen! Weep, oh skies above us! weep tenderly, kindly; shed tears of pity as ye witness man's distress, for he has fallen!

But we will not prolong this contemplation, for more might be written of man's sorrow, the direct or indirect result of sin, than years of reading could disclose; and after we had given time and energy to know all, we would be no happier than at present. So the sooner we may turn our thoughts to brighter themes, the better will it be for all concerned. While we give diligence to extend sympathy to the sorrowing, let all our griefs be committed to the Savior. At the hallowed Cross let us all find sweet relief; for it is our privilege to lay our burdens down. It is written that Jesus Christ,

was "delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification;" but do we not often fail of appropriating to ourselves the privilege of laying down our burdens? Yet it is as truly written, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." Why, then, should we be pressed down with a weight of unnecessary care? Are we so fond of burden-bearing that we assume the load of our own free wills? We may find burdens and sorrows enough, all of which are fully equal to our strength, without touching any of our own. Are you indeed anxious to be a burden-bearer? Opportunity is given for this, and the wisest preparation for the work is to become entirely rid of your own, for you can render better service far to others, with a light heart and a face so full of joy that, by your presence the comfortless will be led to forget their griefs, than you can while oppressed by numerous burdens of your own.

Therefore, have this question of burden-bearing settled here and now, and forevermore. Men pray that God may use them. How can He, while they are cumbered with cares, bowed

with sorrows, and while a cheerless gloom still rests upon them from walking so long beneath the shadows of inconsistency? While idle or harmful words, for which God has no use whatever, escape the lips that should be consecrated to the sacred cause of truth, that others taking knowledge may be led to glorify the God they love—when slight provocation elicits such displays of temper as even the ungodly justly condemn, and should be foreign to every follower of Christ—when mysteries, in which this life always abounds, and which should be met with the calm assurance that God still reigns, though now hidden for a moment, shake the faith that should be as immovable as the everlasting hills—when fear of reproach or shame seals the lips which should be proclaiming this great salvation, so that perhaps three-fourths of the opportunities presented are forever lost, or when trials no greater than those of others and which must be bravely met if they are not to overcome them, produce such unrest that half their comfort is taken away,—how can God use such people, I ask, in the great warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil?

He desires men whom He can trust; who shrink not to undertake the most difficult tasks, and are ready, in His name, to assume any responsibility He desires to place upon them. His service means constant vigilance, faithfulness, work and prayer; not leisure, indulgence and self-preference. The posts which must be guarded cannot be committed to those who may desert at any time. God knows in whom He can confide, and faithful soldiers will never need to be out of service; for God will use any man who proves himself worthy of His Master's confidence. Do you now pray that God may use you? then depart from beneath these shadows into the sunshine of God's love, and none shall be busier than yourself in doing good.

Though many Christians squander time with doubts and fears and trembling, it is unnecessary. The life which believers should lead is different altogether. The Bible declares it to be different; and no Christian has faithfully discharged his duty, who consents to remain the subject of such defeat, though it is so frequently done. Years pass rapidly, leaving Christians much the same, possibly a shade more zealous each January, to slip back into

the well-beaten track of former experiences, then commence again and go the rounds now so familiar. But it is not the *right* way, and no one can offer a satisfactory plea for pursuing it, for Scripture teaches differently.

Would that by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we might deal all inconsistencies their death-blow; then they could give no further trouble. But they are difficult to annihilate. Yet we will give them no quarter, but wield this sword at every step. The declaration that for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment,"* and the commands, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation,"† "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ,"‡ "Let your speech be always with Grace; seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"§ should be sufficient to decide forever whether men are at liberty to speak as though they had special permission to talk according to the promptings of their own feelings.

The injunction to "Be patient toward all men;"|| to "follow after patience,"¶ to "let

*Matt. xii., 36. †1 Pet. i., 15. ‡Phil. i., 27.

§Colos. iv., 6. ¶1 Thess. v., 14. ¶1 Tim. vi., 11

patience have her perfect work,"* to "add to temperance patience,"† and the truth spoken so becomingly, "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise"‡ should forbid all further satisfaction in the persuasion that you, perhaps, are prospering as well as some one else, even though that person *is* considered a model of Christian integrity. What though this may be the truth? It falls below the standard, and you are not prospering as well as you ought to be if you still yield to impatience.

The command to "be not faithless, but believing,"§ to "stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong,"|| to be not "of doubtful mind,"¶ the approval always shown by Christ to the believing, as to the woman of Canaan, and the reproof ever ready for the doubter, as to sinking Peter on the sea of Galilee—these evidences of God's will concerning us leave it not optional whether we shall doubt or believe. We *must not doubt* whatever be our position, if the will of God is to be respected.

*Jas. i., 4.

†2 Pet. i., 6.

‡Heb. x., 36.

§Jno. xx., 27.

||1 Cor. xvi., 13.

¶Luke xii., 29.

The repeated command not to fear, as in those assuring words with promise, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,"* and where Jesus speaks to the encouragement of His beloved saying, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,"† should be all we need desire to convince us that it is wrong for Christians to tremble at the opinions of men, and shirk their duty, lest by performing it they should be made to suffer. If they were living as they ought to be, the thought of displeasing God would produce far more distress than the fear of what man can do unto them.

And again, we should feel reproached to expect less at the bountiful hand of God than is given to the sparrow and the lily of the field. They are fed and clothed; shall we not have as much? We are of more value, and still He cares for them; shall we not share His favor, when He "knoweth that we have need of all these things?" Unbelievers manage to obtain

* Isa. xli., 10.

† Luke xii., 32.

them without the special manifestation of God's favor, how much more they who have sought "first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," when it is written "all these things shall be added?" It often requires years for Christians to learn that worry can never further their designs. Some never learn it. If this time were spent in faithful work for God, larger results would bless the world, while God's care for them would permit no greater privation than their highest good demands. What power we should witness if the commands here noted were obeyed! What sunny lives would ours be, if these shadows were driven forever from our spiritual lives! Yet this is possible, and no believer should remain satisfied with an experience short of this. The question is not, "What *may* you do?" but "What *will* you do?" Victory awaits you; will you have it? The beams of perfect love are pouring their vigor, warmth and beauty into a thousand hearts this hour, and the question is, "Will you step into the light, or remain beneath the shadow?" You may take your choice; have your own way and be weak, or permit God to have His way and be strong. Deny yourself the luxury of indul-

gence and be free, or continue to cling to that religion which appears to tolerate so many inconsistencies and remain a slave. You can do as you please, for no one but yourself is to decide the question.

Self-denial! How difficult it seems! But contest must always precede conquest, and whoever becomes victorious will have a part to act in this spiritual warfare. And though it cost you a struggle to be made free, it is worthy your effort. You may easily be a slave if you desire, but it will be at too great a sacrifice. You cannot afford to be a slave. Victory should be your watchword; victory at any cost; victory to-day, victory forever! If it were not promised, these words might savor of extravagance. But we speak prudently. There is greater reason to hope for victory in the Christian warfare than in any other, for we have the assurance of the presence and assistance of the "Mighty to Save." Now, if equal diligence were given in this field of combat to what is observed in others, life would be one grand conquest for truth and righteousness and God.

How do men strive for the mastery in other things! How persevering are their efforts

to obtain whatever they believe will prove of greatest value to them. If political distinction is their aim, their time, energy, means and often principle are cheerfully given. If it is education, the days, crowded with work, are still too short, and nights of fevered, nervous study follow, until the brain is overwrought and health is impaired. If it be wealth, so determined is the pursuit thereof, that scarcely time is allowed for the observance of the laws of health or obedience to the demands of society and home. If life be jeopardized through illness, what a scene is presented in the afflicted household? Vigils are kept, physicians are summoned, labors suspended for the more important work of caring for the sick. Sympathies are extended by anxious friends, and there is no rest until relief is given. And this is right, for life is precious. It is dear to all and we cling to it. A man will sacrifice any reasonable thing for his life. There are trials, but still we cry, "Give us life!" Sorrows come, but we will endure the sorrows, only let us live! Business, property and every other consideration may go, but we will live if we can, and trust to Providence for future support.

Such is the view men take of earthly advantages and life as a rule. They strive for them as though they meant to win. When eternal life, so happily begun in them, is considered, their courage is often small, their efforts feeble, their time for its consideration limited, and denial in its behalf, if made at all, is made mechanically. Then when the painful consciousness of small development demands an explanation, they stand aghast, and wonder why it is they fail to grow, but remain so long beneath the shadows! There is no "wonder" about it. They have all the sunshine, joy and victory that can be accorded to them. They find their level, which men are surer to do in religion than in anything else. Christian privilege should not be dishonored by such instability. This is not the way to live religion, nor need we live thus. When Christ said "Learn of Me," He designed that His lessons be put to better practice; and they should be, for the Bible teaches a different method of serving God. There is such a thing as living with a firm faith, a peace whose depths are ever undisturbed, in which denial becomes a pleasure, and impatience, murmuring and fear are disallowed. There is

a life in which God Himself has such complete possession of the heart, that no room remains for self or sin. It is opposed (a fate shared by many things of worth), but is none the worse for that; and I wish so to outline this life, that when you see it, you shall be unable to mistake it.

No such perfection of judgment is claimed for it as will preclude the possibility of committing error. To this we shall be liable, as long as we remain in the flesh; and the most conscientious may have occasion to witness disastrous results of blunders or failures they have innocently made. Said an individual of a person who, for a year, had claimed the heritage of faith (and, if I rightly judge, the words were tinctured well with sarcasm), "She has been perfect for a year!" 'Tis a mistake! and no one should study a theme so sacred with as little care as these words betray, or scatter tares so sure to choke the better seed. An intelligent student of God's Word will not consent to profess a thing so impracticable, and where it is professed, the conclusion may be safely drawn that there is something wrong, either with the head or the heart.

Nor does this life claim such development as admits of no further attainment; rather the removal of such obstacles as rendered growth difficult if not impossible. As the well-formed leaf of spring-time has but commenced its growth when the bud has opened and its fetters have been removed, as the babe, with form and feature so symmetrical and well defined, is destined to develop until strong manhood is the result, the child of God whose life accords with the divine arrangement, is freed from that which impedes his growth while yet his knowledge is quite limited. Purity may bless the life of him who knows but little; maturity is only seen after long training in the school of Christ.

But this life does claim such renewal of our being as removes inbred sin natural to the human heart, the creation within us of clean hearts, the elimination from our spiritual nature of everything contrary to the will of God and the Gospel of Christ. We are born in sin. As soon as we are able we practice it, having devoted neither time nor pains to learn. After having reached the years of understanding, we are led through the Holy Spirit to feel our

guilt. We are impressed that it is our duty to seek pardon. By prayer and study of the Bible, we find that a way of escape from sin and its eternal penalty has been provided. We hasten at once to Christ. Our sins are confessed with penitence, forgiveness is granted, and we enter into rest. Our prayers are answered. There is "no condemnation." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But, ere long, trials come; temptation assails. We yield, then repent in sorrow, and resolve never to yield again. But soon this is repeated, and in astonishment we demand, "How is this? Why do I thus sin? What mean these roots of bitterness, and I a professed follower of Christ?" Then is born within us a yearning for something more! A something, we scarcely know what to call it, but something to which we still are strangers—higher, mightier, deeper, broader than what has been experienced, and which will enable us to exist without transgressing thus.

But some one will ask, "Why was not this given at first? God is perfect, whatever he does is also perfect. Why, then, did He leave

me in such a condition?" We answer, God *did* perform perfectly what you desired, and all you thought of at the time. Your heart was burdened and you sought pardon. Was it not given? Have you so soon forgotten the rest and joy and comfort of the blissful day "when first you saw the Lord?" How the burden was rolled away, and your lips could not restrain the gratitude which would find expression in songs of praise? It is a happy memory and will live forever. But what now? You desire again. Is it that you have entirely lost what you then received? Not at all. You are still a child of God, the condemnation for past sins does not afflict you now, but I will tell you what the trouble is. You have been learning more of your heart, which now refuses to be satisfied with pardon only. God has been teaching you that though pardon is good, something more is needed to keep you from further offense. The Holy Spirit did not reveal everything at once. He first told you that pardon was necessary, and assisted you in finding it. To-day He comes with another message of love, whispering that you need a *clean* heart, and will as truly aid you in secur-

ing that also. O, believing child of God, are not these words the truth? Do not you feel that something more is necessary? Then be content to listen to the faithful voice of God that calls you. Waste no time with hair-breadth technicalities. Your soul hungers still? Then let it feast on living bread.

CHAPTER X.

WHY SHADOWS TROUBLE US.

Salvation signifies preservation from some calamity. Let me illustrate. A ship is put in trim for a voyage along the coast. The day for departure has dawned, and the captain, who has encountered a hundred storms without sustaining serious injury or loss, (regardless of the service-signal raised in prediction of a coming storm, that all may see and take the warning) issues the command to start, and the ship sails. All is serene for a time, but presently, and without an hour's warning, an irresistible hurricane sweeps down upon them. It lashes the water into maddened billows which rise higher and higher with every passing hour.

The surprised and terrified seamen work heroically for a time, but to no avail. First, the spars fall overboard, then the helm is unshipped, and after the now unmanageable craft has wrestled bravely with the elements, she is

cruelly hurled against the reef, where she is hopelessly disabled, and begins to fill and sink. Anxious men have now assembled upon the shore, and are ready with the life-boat, only awaiting the signal of distress, to which they promptly respond; and pushing through the surf, are soon at the vessel's side. Ere long this captain, self-confident as he had been, and all his men, are safe upon the land. Let us linger with them there, that we may also witness the closing scene.

Seamen become attached to their vessels, and are not easily reconciled to the thought of their destruction. They stand by them to the last, sometimes at their own risk. This is the case in the instance before us, with the owner and master of the ship. Seeming to forget his rescue, and thinking only of the sinking vessel, he wishes to watch the craft until she is lost to sight beneath the waves; and with this desire, gazing intently upon the ship, regardless of danger, he walks the beach, until he has reached the lower strand. And now a mountain breaker, rolling in, trips him from his feet, and with its receding motion carries him back into the seething waters, and his friends come again to

his assistance by throwing him a line, which he seizes with desperate grasp, and firmly holds, until, drenched, bruised and chilled, he is drawn safely to the shore. The captain was saved, but not in as good shape as might have been the case, had he exercised greater caution. Far up on the bluff, where the billows do not reach, stand the crew, also beholding the exciting scene; but, think they, we have been rescued once, and will not needlessly expose ourselves to further danger; since nothing can be gained by venturing, we will remain where the storm is unable to do us harm. These men, both crew and captain, were saved; but how much better off were they than he?

Indulge me in another illustration. A building is in flames. At an upper window a boy cries wildly for aid. Soon the fireman ascends the ladder, grasps the child, binds him to himself and descends. The boy is saved! What expressions of gratitude escape the child's lips, and how he lauds the heroism of his rescuer!

But boys, though easily frightened, are not slow in recovering; and our hero wishes to

remain and witness the progress of the fire. He desires to wait at least until the roof falls in, then he will be content to go; and drawing nearer than safety will allow, that he may command the best view possible, he stands and gazes with others upon the scene of conflagration, till suddenly a dislodged rafter, clothed with flame, falling from the height, alights at his very standing place, bruising and crippling the boy who must now be carried from the ground. That boy was saved, but might not he have been more fortunate with greater prudence?

Now let me tell you about salvation on a larger scale. There burns a fire of greater intensity than the one depicted in my illustration, for all who remain forgetful of God. It is the remorse which ever follows sin, begun even in this life; it may be the same in the next, doubtless associated with something of more material form; but whatever be its nature, it is bad enough, and hot enough, and is to endure eternally. Now the race was exposed to this calamity when God beheld its danger. He saw that unless a hand to rescue was extended, the race must be forever lost; and in

mercy sent His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior, who, regardless of His own ease, came to save us. We stand to-day as brands "plucked out of the burning."

Well may Christians rejoice that their sins are pardoned, that they have been rescued, and are now the children of God. How safe they feel! How confident that no harm can reach them through the existence of this fiery region! But often they become careless; for, as the saved child of my illustration, they, having been rescued, presume to draw nearer and nearer to the forbidden ground, the border-line of sinfulness, and are scorched ere they are aware of it. Sin enters, they yield to temptation, and though they return immediately to Christ for the balm provided for every wound, they are compelled to suffer for their presumption. And it is well for them that they do suffer, for possibly experience may some day teach them that if they would not be burned, they must keep away from the fire.

This is the plane upon which many Christians are living. They are being scorched and wounded and bruised each day they live; and so accustomed have they become to

this mode of life, that they regard their sins as unavoidable during earthly existence, and the conception of life from which they are eliminated is to them an absurdity; yea, more; an impossibility; while before them lies the open Bible in which sin is condemned in strongest terms, but sanctioned nowhere; in which men are warned, besought, commanded to forsake it, on penalty of death if they refuse; where they are taught that it is wrong, nay, absolutely wicked to commit it; that indulgence in it constitutes the deepest possible offense against the God they profess to love; where it is written,—“Awake to righteousness, and *sin not.*”* “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”†

“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”‡ “Stand in awe and *sin not.*”§ “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.”|| “These things write I unto you, that ye *sin not.*”¶ “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith.”**

* 1 Cor. xv., 34. † 1 Thess. v., 22. ‡ 2 Tim. ii., 19.

§ Ps. iv., 4. || Habak i., 13. ¶ 1 Jno. ii., 1.

** 1 Pet. v., 8, 9.

What mean these words? and how shall we ignore them? They stand unchangeable as God himself; nor can they suffer modification. Whosoever would venture to add to these words of life, or take from them, must suffer most certainly the Divine displeasure. No man must trespass upon the dignity of the sacred Book. It must remain unaltered, as the holy word of God. This we all know, nor would we be guilty of such presumption. What construction, then, shall we put upon these imperative words? Do they mean "resist" until some formidable temptation is presented, and then yield, only for the moment, being sure to return and seek forgiveness? Or are we to understand that we may indulge in an occasional transgression, with care, however, not to wander *very* far astray, but as soon as conscience begins to lash us, hasten to Christ and again implore His favor, only to repeat the indulgence at the next opportunity? This were but playing with truth, and would be an outrage to the sense of honor and propriety. If the Bible taught such doctrine, the standard of Christianity would fall so low that the honest-minded would consider it unworthy of their

attention. Yet in practical life Christians too often display to a criticising world a religion of this very type; a religion by which they are not kept from sinning week by week and month by month. They make no such profession; but willingly admit that though possessing some knowledge of the way of life, conscience frequently arrests them for transgression. And they expect nothing different from this so long as they remain in the flesh, but seem to have resigned themselves to the prospect of being thus subjected to frequent defeat, with the hope that death will furnish some wonderfully transforming power, by which they shall at last be liberated from the bondage which all their lives long so reduced their comfort!

Alas for the race if this be all that Christianity affords! And alas for the incomplete fulfillment of Christ's mission, though He died upon the cross for sinners. The eloquence of prophets who foretold His coming stirred the hearts of thousands. The eyes of a world gazed with profoundest interest at His advent. Happy millions, catching the enthusiasm, have since proclaimed that the Redeemer has come, that He has "led captivity captive," that

through His merits burdened souls are freed “from the law of sin and death!” But stop! It is a mistake! He came, truly, with this intent, to “save His people from their sins,” but the project has proved to be only a partial success. He can save from *many* sins but not from *all*! From the most extravagant, but not from the numerous offenses which are just as truly sinful in God’s sight, though less noticeable to the eyes of men! these must be suffered to exist, at least, if not to dominate, until the disappointed soul is liberated by death and the life to come. What a pity! Hush, ye jubilant saints, who fondly declare His power to save. You are deluded! you are not so wonderfully saved, you cannot be in this world of evil; death alone can set you free. God, for Christ’s sake will forgive you to-day if you implore Him, but to-morrow you will need to sin again! Oh, what hallucination! What an error is thus crippling the church of God! Shall we tolerate this thought? Shall we accept with satisfaction a religion whose standard extends no further benefit to a dying race than this? Verily, we shall not! We dare not! for thus we would dishonor the cause we love! Away

with such offense! and give to Christ the honor due unto His name! There is no failure in God's plan for our salvation. It is perfect, and meets our every want for this world as well as for the other! "Ye are clean," said Christ, "through the word which I have spoken unto you."* But he is not clean who sins when temptations are presented. Before he can be clean, these tendencies to evil must be overcome through the grace of God who always rewards the faith that worketh by a perfect love to Him. The soul must feel and avoid the slightest approach of sin, and find shelter in God ere the curse has been able to taint his soul.

How reasonable is the view which honors God with power to keep from evil those who have committed themselves to Him; and how absurd to suppose Him capable of saving from such transgressions as are commonly accounted to be enormous, yet either unable or unwilling to save from such as are often committed by Christians whose standing in the estimation of all is excellent, but who know that they are not living as they should, and as the Bible commands them to live. That He does save from

* Jno. xv., 3.

the most glaring sins, we know: for many of us have not only proved this truth to our own satisfaction, but have witnessed it in others. Let us take an ordinary case by way of illustration. Here is one who once was a notorious transgressor, daily committing sins of great enormity. Intemperance, with its attendant vices, was the evil which always mastered him. The labors of most faithful friends failed to effect reform. He solemnly gave his promise to abstain; resolved twice as often not to fall again; but notwithstanding all, the gutter became weekly more familiar, he failed, and failed again, until it seemed that no hope remained.

Thus, comfortless, he one day strolled to the place where sinners were being called to repentance. Conviction seized the man. Though conscious of his degradation, and almost in despair, he began to inquire the way of life, asking if there was hope. Faithful Christians assisted the returning wanderer, and bade him "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," assuring him that thus he should "be saved." He questioned not the truth. With the faith of childhood he did believe, and the same hour entered into rest. The Spirit witnessed with

his spirit that he was a child of God. Hope for the future became hourly more radiant. Joy thrilled his heart as he confessed the Savior of the "chief" of sinners. From that day he was a changed man. No more intemperance impaired his health and destroyed the happiness of his home, but each day brought fresh comforts to that stricken family. The man was saved! and that by the most reliable method known to reclaim permanently the drunkard. That day will never be forgotten. It marked the beginning of a better life. And as he now beholds one of his former companions of the wine-cup reeling by the wayside, with reddened eyes and other marks of dissipation, the tear starts to his eye; his voice is raised in thanks to his great deliverer as he affirms, that, had it not been for the grace of God he would be as wretched as the sot he pities so.

And yet this very man is conscious of committing sin in one form or another almost every day he lives. Nothing noticeable to others it may be. They do not condemn him, but he is respected as a God-fearing man, which is the truth. Perhaps it is only an impatient act or word when he should be victorious. It may be

but slight indulgence in thoughts of revenge or other unkindness, in which the will concurs, and which is afterward confessed with sorrow. Possibly an act of selfishness when he understands very well the way of self-denial. Something of this kind, but sufficient to convince him that though he has been raised from the gutter, there still remains much which should be different, and which the Bible condemns. Now let me ask just here: would it be more difficult for God to save him from such offenses as these which are barely noticeable to the world, than it was for Him to save from the glaring sin of intemperance? Indeed no! And so it may be said of every sin, no matter what its nature. If God can save from one sin, He can from all. How reasonably, then, may believers hope to swing out from beneath the shadows of unfaithfulness which often darken the Christian's pathway! Oh, tempted ones, desirous of victory though often defeated, remember Jesus! He is "mighty to save." As you go into the world, the enemy will beset you no less severely than he has a thousand times already. But when the darkest hour has come, bear in mind that Jesus is able

to save you where and as you are. Then raise your heart to the Answerer of Prayer, and, as the Lord liveth, deliverance will come.

Let us not trifle about religion, becoming wearied before we have gone far enough to appreciate fully the beauties of Christianity, as those children, who but half complete the tasks which, if faithfully performed, would be of untold benefit to them. How often this is seen. I have known parents to be desirous that their child should acquire a musical education, and make all necessary preparations. The instrument was purchased, the services of the instructor engaged, the child herself was all enthusiasm over the new idea, and almost imagined herself already to be a musician. But a few lessons in the rudiments, a few weeks' practice on the keyboard, some weariness from the necessary exertion, and the project was abandoned; given up just before the most unpleasant portion of that labor always preceding the display of accomplishment, was fulfilled; when a trifle more endurance and determination would have placed the pupil where practice is pleasure. No one becomes proficient in that way. There must be faithful,

persistent effort if anything worth the while is to be achieved.

And though salvation is bestowed as a free gift, the gift is frequently abused. Christians often betray the spirit of childish weariness in well-doing; almost becoming victorious, but not quite, they remain "tossed with the tempest" by which those of shallow experience are ever disturbed, "and not comforted," when, by little more persistence, they might enter into rest. They choose to remain among the breakers whose roily waters lash the beach, instead of launching out where depths are unfathomable, and where there is a possibility of outriding such storms as may come, without disaster.

But there is a reason for this depreciation of God's gift, and the attendant weariness "in well-doing." There is a cause for unfaithfulness in the Christian life, and we wish just here to point it out. God commands us not to sin; declares what the consequences shall be if we do; tells us that Christ is able also "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Why is it then that Christians are troubled with experiences so unsatisfactory, to say the least? The answer, corroborated by

the testimony and experience of ten thousand Christians is, that notwithstanding the fact that they believe God to be love, and therefore worthy of their unlimited confidence, this belief has not been acted upon to the full extent of their capability; and such a reserve of their affections has been made as renders them unable either to trust or act with the cheerfulness, resignation and delight of him whose affections are fully bestowed upon its object. Their love for God is imperfect; that is to say, they do not love Him with all the power they possess, and which would, if exercised, dispel their doubts and fears, besides wonderfully increasing their zeal. They still unwisely relate themselves to God as though He were merely their King, while they should regard Him as their Father: thus the union necessary to the eradication of doubt and servile fear is prevented. Though they have become the children of God, and should be enjoying all the privileges extended by the Father who saith "all things are yours," the position assumed and the service rendered are still too much like those of the servant who does not claim the right to the inheritance of his master's richest treasures.

Their conduct toward God would indicate the fear that they were presuming too much in actually claiming the privileges of children. In an unbeliever, such a condition of things might naturally be expected; but since Christ has been accepted through faith, there should be no barrier between the soul and God.

Yet that this is often the case, Christians are painfully conscious, and the result is a degree of slavishness which characterizes the service that ought to be rendered as the expression of unlimited confidence and outgushing affection. Under these conditions it is not possible to bestow such service as that which is prompted by the filial love of the child for the parent. No one can relate himself to an object which has but partially awakened his affections as he can to one which so monopolizes his thought, nerves his arm and inspires his being, that labor for it becomes a pleasure, sacrifice a delight. He may, indeed, work and sacrifice for other objects with a degree of enthusiasm, but after a while weariness will come, in spite of him. He will sacrifice to a certain limit; beyond that, the duty becomes burdensome and weariness begins. Further efforts are not pleasurable;

they are irksome. It is not so where the affections are fully engaged. Nothing is said of weariness or monotony then. Indeed, burdens lose their weight to such affection, and are willingly, cheerfully, lovingly borne; and the heavier the burdens, the greater is the eagerness to relieve. And if our surrender to God has been complete, and we love Him with the undivided affection His love to us deserves, and His word commands, the service we render will be one of pleasure, not weariness. Now let us offer the test;—there are burdens to be borne for Christ, victories to be won, sacrifices to be made, labors to be performed. He calls to you; He says, “Take up the cross, deny yourself, forsake all, be faithful unto death. Do these things for *My* sake. Do them, not because you live in dread of Me, but because you *love* Me;* because My Father has made you His children, and I am your Brother. We desire to save you fully, to develop in you the noblest character possible; and this service is necessary: therefore, do these things for My sake!” What response does He hear from you? Is there complaint of weariness? Is there im-

* Jno. xiv., 15, 23.

patience, doubt, fear, uneasiness and desire for a service less troublesome, with liberty to act more as inclination prompts? Then know that you do not love God as you should. If you *did*, your glad heart would bound forth with eagerness to embrace whatever God's love demands. And here rests the great secret of unfaithfulness. It lies in the fact that though Christians have been convinced through the Gospel that God has a claim upon their undivided love, and the best service they can render (which always will be given when this affection is bestowed), such an offering has *not* been made.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REMEDY.

This meager return for God's matchless love and sacrifice, this return which displays such inconsistencies as we have named, and which are known to afflict believers everywhere, being the cause of their unfaithfulness, the remedy naturally suggested is, that since they cannot doubt God's worthiness of their entire confidence and the richest offering they are able to bestow, they now dedicate all to God. It is that this defective love be replaced by a love so deep and strong and changeless that the very thought of disobedience in any form will give pain, and keep the Christian so constantly on guard that the approach of sin will be met with uncompromising promptness. The surest way to become watchful is to become loving. He guards most zealously his heart who loves the most. Now let the heart be *filled* with love to God, and the mystery will vanish, and with it all inconsistency.

This, dear reader, is the secret of happiness, rest, peace, victory, faithfulness, fearlessness and every good that a Christian ought to have:—*to love God with a perfect heart.* In coming to Christ at first there was conscientiousness, but since that time unpleasant developments have appeared, to the Christian's great sorrow. He is now aware that he did not fully know his own heart, nor suppose that anything further was necessary. He looked upon conversion as though it were a sort of insurance policy which was to cover the present and future so completely that little remained but for him to congratulate himself on his good fortune in becoming a child of God. But to-day he is undeceived; he discovers, to his dismay, that there still are disturbing elements.

He exercised faith in God before, in believing God's manifested love through Jesus Christ; but simply the gift of pardon proved insufficient to satisfy permanently, either the bountiful Giver or the recipient; and while the latter wonders at the unfaithfulness which still afflicts him, the Holy Spirit confirms the convictions of his conscience and the instruction of his

opened Bible, by bringing another message of God's love, whispering that he needs a *clean heart*.

And now that the facts are revealed as they exist, that he is apprised of the incompleteness of his love, and that God's demand is an unreserved abandonment to Him, nothing less than an affection which extends to the utmost limit of his being, influencing each word and act, prompting the most careful vigilance, and stimulating to deeds of kindness and self-sacrifice, can either satisfy his conscience or secure such special favor at the hand of God as he now craves. And this is reasonable; nor should he aspire to anything short of this. God has given the best in His possession, why should not man do likewise?

To say that it is impracticable would not be right, for this is the declared will of God, and God has made it possible, through Christ, for us to love Him supremely, in return for His love toward us. The law is not destroyed but fulfilled in love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."^{*} "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but

* Rom. xiii., 10.

faith which worketh by love."* "We love Him, because He first loved us."†

This theme of simple, yet perfect love to God has been abused until a cloud of mystery overshadows it which hinders honest enquirers from obtaining a clear view of it. Many regard the thought of loving God with perfect hearts as impracticable, while at the same time they do not find it difficult to bestow such love upon less worthy objects. Would an individual of character knowingly consent to embark for the stormy voyage of life with one whose affection was divided? Never! Nor could any man have the audacity to make a request in which so much is involved if he were the man he ought to be. If honor and mutual happiness are to enter as considerations, there must be a willingness to lay everything at this sacred shrine. No mentionable sacrifice must be great enough to produce a wavering mind. No misfortune so dark that affection's light cannot penetrate its shadow. No trial so grievous but mutual participation lessens its intensity, and no allurement from the evil world must be powerful enough to tempt to unfaithfulness

* Gal. v., 6.

† 1 Jno. iv., 19.

those whose honor has been so solemnly plighted. All this is expected, nay *demanded* at the altar of human love. Shall God have less than this? It were wronging Him to offer less! He deserves, expects, desires and demands *all*; and no Christian may comfort himself in the thought of duty well performed while any reserve remains. God's command is, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."* He says, "Give me thine heart,"† not merely a portion of it, but *all*; and that means give God your love and service; for in the heart these things find birth. Whatever of good is known to adorn the character, comes as the expression of good within; "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things;" and the best way to bring forth such fruit in life is to have the heart filled with God; so that evil can find no dwelling-place there.

And this is why God desires our hearts. He would take them and fill them with Himself, that we may abide in Him as the branch abideth in the vine, and partake of his nature. But God cannot do this while any reserve is made.

* Col. iii., 2.

† Prov. xxiii., 26.

Nor should we be prevailed upon to make it. If we are to love God at all, why not as well love Him with the whole heart as only in small measure? Why not rather render the service of our entire being than the weakly efforts which little more than deserve the name?

If the Bible is to be our guide we shall find that the demand upon us is great. The words to the son of David were, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him *with a perfect heart* and with a *willing mind*: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever."* And these words have lost no force by the lapse of ages, but are expressive of God's will concerning us to-day.

God cannot be satisfied with less love toward Him than is entertained by us for our nearest earthly kindred. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."† God's requirement, after manifesting His love to us,

* 1 Chron. xxviii., 9.

† Matt. x., 37.

is, that we be “rooted and grounded in love,”* “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love;”† and to those who mark His desire and render obedience, are extended the most blessed promises; for Christ saith, “He that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.” Then He adds, “If any man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”‡ Blessed words! Who can resist them? and who that has known anything of God’s love can consent to hold himself in reserve when the Gospel teems with exhortations to loving obedience? God desires only our good. Sin is the enemy that is endeavoring to destroy His children; but God is determined upon their salvation if they will simply permit it, and He leaves no means unemployed of promoting this end. And can we, in consideration of His love toward us, offer returns so small that we will be content to yield feebly to such temptations as are presented day by day, when greater love to Him would engender in us such contempt

* Eph. iii., 17. † Eph. i., 4. ‡ Jno. xiv., 21, 23.

for whatever displeases Him that we would spurn its very approach? Such service is unworthy those who are called the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and furnishes poor illustration of the liberty that Christians fondly profess. It is very unlike the spirit of the Apostle's exhortation, "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*

Captivity is grievous under all conditions, but doubly distressing when its subjects have known the delights of freedom and have fallen victims to a malicious foe. When I behold a golden-winged songster confined within the wiry cage, one that has never known the privilege of freedom unrestrained, and compare its condition with that of the ten thousand happy warblers who fill the air with praise and human hearts with joy, I pity the unfortunate bird and am almost disposed to set it free. Still, it has always been a captive; and having known no other life may resign itself to the inevitable.

* Gal. v., 1.

But when I look upon one that has revelled amid the delights of nature at its own free will, having never known restraint, now cruelly imprisoned within the gloomy wires, when I listen to the plaintive cry for liberty which forms its only substitute for the heart-thrilling melody once disclosed—this touches a chord of deeper sympathy, and my heart aches for the captive bird.

And when I behold a human soul who has always been a stranger to the liberty of God's sufficient grace, having never known the joys of life renewed, of course I desire to labor for his salvation and lead him, if possible, to the fountain of living water where he may drink, never again to thirst. But when I see one who has been born into the Kingdom, has known something of the Christian's liberty, and who should have continued to develop, knowing more each day and becoming stronger and better by the patient resistance of evil, again led in chains, and when I see him positively yielding to temptation, my sorrow is stirred for that soul, and I am desirous of enlisting all the energy at my command in an effort to unlock his fetters, loosen his chains, and show him

that such weakness is not a necessity, but that God's design in making His children free is that they *remain* so.

Dear Christian, in view of your conscious needs, the demands of the church, society, friends, family and your own heart upon you, in view of your privilege as a child of God, and the claims of your Heavenly Father, let me ask, "Will you longer submit to bondage when liberty may be yours?" You were conscientious in seeking favor with God, can you henceforth remain so without submitting yourself to Him in all things, that His own perfect designs may be fully accomplished in you? Can you still be content to offer unto God only the small degree of love which you now hold for Him in return for all His benefits toward you? Will you not rather satisfy conscience, obey God's command, encourage His friends and defeat His foes by yielding unto God a better offering?

Are you not well assured that this demand upon you is reasonable, and that it will be wrong for you to refuse? What conclusion then can we form but this: that you *will* and *do* consent? This is our *only* conclusion, for you could not

be persuaded knowingly to do wrong, and we shall join you in praise to God that a soul has come forth from beneath the shadows, evermore to walk in the light of a perfect love to God.

Now, such a decision cannot be made without involving a principle of resignation to God which will so acknowledge the wisdom, reasonableness and justice of His requirements; that all shall be accepted without questionings or misgivings; and you are to regard it your chief concern to do or suffer whatever is revealed to be the will of God. Henceforth God is to have His own way in you, and you must so recognize His way to be right, that you will desire no other yourself; so that your way shall be His way, and both shall blend in perfect harmony.

Your first impulse will be to demonstrate in some way the sincerity of your heart, and you will ask, "How shall I give proof to God that I am determined to love Him with all my power?" And the answer will manifest itself in everything touching your relations to him. First, it will be characterized by the belief that God can save you from all unrighteousness, inasmuch as it is

written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* If this be doubted, if the fear is entertained that perhaps it cannot be, it certainly *shall* not be, for that very fear is evidence of limited confidence in God, for we also read in the Word, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear."† But no one is likely to be seen seeking that which he apprehends cannot be found. That man is mad who gropes about in a blind search after what he believes does not exist; but he whose confidence in God is perfect, will not doubt His power to save him to the uttermost, for God has clearly declared His ability to do so.

Your resolution to love God with your whole heart will be characterized further by a fixed purpose to forsake sin of every description. Christians often make this determination, but associate with it the fear that possibly they may retain some secret sin without designing to do so. Says one; "None would be more happy to do this than myself, but many sins are so deeply seated, some habits have taken hold upon me with such an inveterate grasp, that

* 1 Jno. i., 9.

† 1 Jno. iv., 18.

it seems as though no power at my command is sufficient to ensure a complete relinquishment of them; for I have tried again and again, yet am frequently overcome, notwithstanding." But they who exercise that unlimited confidence in God which it is the privilege of all to maintain, believe that whatever power is lacking in themselves will be furnished by their reasonable Father, who never demands what cannot be fulfilled; that should their most faithful effort to overcome be menaced by an evil power which is mightier than the power they possess, God will come to their assistance at that very hour, and their determined effort, coupled with divine help, will enable them to fulfill the command with promise, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."* Encouraged by such cheering words, with confidence stronger than ever, they demand, as they face the temptation, "Is Satan mightier than God, that we must be compelled to do this against God's direct command? Are his angels more numerous than

* 2 Cor. vi., 17, 18.

are the spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation? 'Get thee hence, Satan!' " and looking to God they find relief, and prove the verity of the Word, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Let Christians thus antagonize themselves to sin at every turn, with the resolve that they will abhor it as the poison of an asp; let them bear in mind that God forbids them to commit it, and make it the great business of their lives to obey, whether they accomplish anything else or not, and in the hour of extremity call upon the Almighty for assistance; they will do marvelous things of which they had never dreamed.

With the resolve to forsake sin, this determination thus to love God will further manifest itself in an intelligent consecration to Him of heart, mind and body, with all pertaining thereto. It will be such complete abandonment as acknowledges God's right to all the service they are capable of rendering; and whatever is said, thought or achieved is to be done as unto God and not unto themselves. They are to be recognized as being no longer their own, but God's, and, accordingly, their

aim must be to glorify Him in their bodies and in their spirits, which are God's. Then, too, they realize their powerlessness to keep themselves from evil; former experiences in the attempt to do so promise nothing but defeat if repeated, and instead of venturing this, all is committed to a higher power; while diligence is given to live so as to accomplish all the good possible. Their abilities, whether great or small, are henceforth to be employed in a continuous effort to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom, and bring glory to His name; discountenancing the idea that because we cannot be generals, therefore we must be of no account on the battle-field, that for the reason we are unable to do the work of mighty men, we are justified in neglecting our humbler duties. God can use anybody; and will accomplish good with the feeblest instrument if it be so committed to His wise direction as not to chafe against His providence, but cheerfully execute His bidding. People frequently waste years of time and opportunity in casting listlessly about in the vain endeavor to find their places in the world. Discontented with one thing, they try something else for a while,

only to meet with similar failure : thus they flit from one thing to another until life is past and nothing of value is accomplished. The surest remedy for this is an intelligent and deliberate abandonment to God of all these powers. He will use them. Something will develop, for God created these energies for activity, not inaction ; and He has a work for every one to do. Now if they are honestly committed to Him in consecration, how naturally will they fall into the right sphere of usefulness. And what joy will attend the assurance that they are working for God, performing just that labor which He desires at their hands. Without the uneasiness that is experienced by those who feel themselves out of place in the world, they cheerfully respond to duty's call, even though they be as he who "goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed," assured that they shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

Reputation also will be placed in the keeping of Him who is to take the best possible care of it ; permitting humiliation if that be the most wholesome for the soul, or exalta-

tion if the Father sees that no evil shall result therefrom. In either case the promise stands, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly;" so that if humiliation comes, it comes only as a blessing, in the midst of which thanksgiving will be offered, and grace implored for victory in the ordeal which, perhaps, will not be gratifying to the flesh. Naturally we shrink from things of this kind, especially if unconscious of any good reason for such trying visitations ; but knowing that God never makes mistakes, time will not be wasted by demanding, "Why must I suffer thus after doing all within my power to please God?" but the undismayed follower will rather exclaim, "I need this, or God would not have permitted it, for He loves me, and I shall accept my position with gratitude; for He will not permit me to suffer longer than is necessary to work out my greatest good." And what relief will come, through such a disposition, to those who for years have been slaves to public opinion, or otherwise harassed on account of conditions which seemed inevitable, and in which they were galled as by a yoke of iron! The very awkwardness of their position will furnish

opportunity for still further test of God's sufficient grace than would have been given with every condition so favorable that no special help seemed necessary. And on the other hand, if it pleases God to bestow such favor as naturally enkindles feelings of exaltation, with that spirit which acknowledges Him to be the giver of every good thing, no boastfulness will rob the blessing of its sweetness, but all will be attributed to the source from whence it came.

Material substance, also, forms an item in the catalogue of consecrated gifts, and is henceforth to be employed, more than ever, if possible, in the furtherance of God's cause. The time has forever passed when optional donations for the promotion of Christianity pacify the conscience, but they are now and for the future to be made from principle. Penuriousness will not be tolerated in him who loves God with all his heart; but if the danger of unfaithfulness formerly lay in this direction, it will be the very point demanding most unfailing vigilance; and what was once an irksome duty will be performed with cheerfulness.

And habits of life, a theme once so distasteful, banished whenever presented, but on account of which conscience inflicted many a lash, even when all other rebukes were disregarded, will now find a place within his thought and daily attention never known before. Many Christians refuse to observe the test when it is so applicable as to interfere with long-established practices, some of which are so obnoxious that their brethren instinctively recoil, even while sacred subjects are the themes of converse. But so near do such practices approach the "appearance of evil" from which God cautions His beloved to "abstain," that in forsaking sin these things are surrendered with it, and when the consecration of all is made, they can be conscientious in the belief that they have presented their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," which is their "reasonable service."

Finally, with this assurance that God is able to accomplish the great work, the determination to do your part in forsaking every known sin, and the consecration of all to Him for time and eternity, your resolve to love God with your whole heart will further manifest itself in

that faith which tolerates no doubt that God *accepts* the consecration when it is made, fulfills His promise, and *makes you all His own*. If this acceptation is questioned, your consecration will be valueless.

Neither your determination to forsake sin, your consecration of all to God, nor anything else that you are able to do, can possibly deliver you; and in taking these steps you simply place yourself where this deliverance becomes a possibility; but after all, it is God who is to accomplish the work, and that, too, on the condition of your absolutely trusting Him to do it.

This desired blessing is to be received *through faith*, as was that of pardon. Let this be distinctly understood. And this faith will be genuine; something more than a mere "say-so." It is easy to *say* "Lord I believe," but this avails little unless such is actually the case, as thousands needlessly prove to their sorrow. Yet if we have no more faith in God than to suppose that He is going to regard us with indifference, after we have exerted ourselves to the utmost limit of our capability, we need expect little at His hands. To do so would be

absurd; nay, it would be cruel. We have His word, and that is sufficient, even in the absence of all desirable feeling on the subject. A little sight and a little feeling are good things, and we shall hope for and expect them, but we shall not permit our faith to waver if they fail to appear; if God, for some wise reason, denies them for the time, we shall demonstrate the genuineness of our faith by holding fast to the Word, whatever be the condition of our feelings. There need be no uneasiness, for God will do right whether we understand Him or not; and if our love is simple, and we walk by faith and not by sight, salvation, with a deeper significance than we have ever known, shall be given in all its fullness. Our daily walk will be more consistent, our self-mastery more perfect, our comfort deeper, our fruit for the glory of God more abundant than ever in the past; and we shall be convinced that there is more in the religion of the Bible than the most extravagant conceptions of it our hopes had ever woven. And the surest way to keep from losing what has already been given of God's grace, is to press onward to this deeper experience in the life of faith.

CHAPTER XII.

WALKING WITH GOD.

No truer words were ever penned than these: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;" and the whole life will display indications which plainly declare the character of the heart's treasure, whether it be worthy or unworthy.

Perhaps wealth is the shrine before which all a man's powers bow; and so captivated by the thought of possessing it is the helpless devotee, that time is not long enough and strength is too small to permit such exertion as will enable him to keep pace with his desire for it. That man's very countenance ere long betrays him, and tells to a world that he loves money; for avarice is stamped indelibly upon his features in characters which cannot be mistaken. Wherever he may go, the absorbing thought is present. While others delight in the beauties revealed by the natural world in earth, sky and sea, with measured step, brow

knit with care, and lips set in determination, he pursues his way as though but one goal should be sought by mortals, and that is *money*. He thinks of it continually, seeks it everywhere, labors for it with tireless zest. His conversation displays a natural fondness for the subject, and he is never so much at ease as when discussing plans and means for its acquirement.

Or possibly this object is a friend who, through a kind Providence, was given long ago in the springtime of life. What cherished memories of the intervening years, which now seem as but a dream of yesterday, flash before the mind. Memories of mutual burdens borne without a murmur, of sorrows shared, of bereavements which but served to weld more firmly the bonds that made them one, of happy days, also, which had been filled with sadness to the one, but for the presence of the other, who, alone, in this wide world, held the power to furnish the satisfaction craved. How beautiful the lives of those whose evening is crowned with the golden halo of an ever-widening love! And what characteristics appear more prominent in these whose feet are nearing the brink

of the narrow stream which prevents them from bounding out into the fields of everlasting love? They are largely those which are seen and displayed in the other. In either case, much that was worthy of example could be noticed; and the one, observing this in the other, was drawn out, imperceptibly, it may be, but no less certainly, to do likewise; and the result is, they have grown to be alike.

Now, if the affections of believers are placed upon Christ, a similar result will follow, in their lives. They shall become, oh, blessed thought, like Christ, their divine Master. He cannot come to be like them, for He is perfect; but they shall be transformed into His lovely likeness. That mind shall be in them "which was also in Christ Jesus;" and they will manifest it by a consistent walk and conversation. Their lives will speak with greater effect than their tongues, for these may often be restrained through slowness of speech or other physical defect. But they shall be living epistles, "known and read of all men." Was Christ charitable? forgiving those who sought His favor, and even praying for his enemies? His beloved will not be slow in perceiving the crown-

ing grace, but learn to exercise the same toward those who are unkind to them. They will forgive them, and that, too, with the spirit which seeks to forget and bury out of sight what can only engender unpleasant feelings, if cherished in the heart.

They will not be fond of exposing to the world the shadowy side of men's characters, but while faithful in the attempt to effect a remedy, if that be possible, by such loyalty as discountenances sin whether it appears in friends or foes, they will use all diligence to promote their comfort as they, in common with others, wage the battle of life, in which so many discouraging elements appear, even to those who are accounted among the fortunate. There will be no secret pleasure taken in displaying the faults of others when no further end can be served thereby than the gratification of natural fondness for talk. Charity will demand deeper regard for the feeling and welfare of other people, and be quick to apprehend that whatever delight might possibly be derived from such imprudence, would in this way be taken at too great a cost to both concerned; and the tongue, that "unruly evil, full

of deadly poison" (when left unmastered), will be bridled so that others, whether disposed to extend their sympathies or not, shall dwell in safety by them. They will be kind; not harsh, severe, cruel or envious. And when acquaintances prosper, and show such ability as is regarded with respect by the ingenuous and generous, the charitable will not be found hedging up their way by unmanly designs and cowardly plots, nor even limiting their prosperity by silence, when a word might materially extend it, but will bid them Godspeed, and seek to promote their success. There will be no smallness allowed, for the moment its tendency appears it will be arrested as an enemy to the soul, and banished. Envy and the spirit of Christ cannot abide in the same heart; and since the Master is henceforth to have His own way, and dwell in His children, and they in Him, all disturbing elements must be driven and barred forever from the heart.

When good is actually accomplished, also, no trumpet shall invite the world to come and see how great things they have done! but they will be quiet, and leave the leaven to work. There are those who could feel no condemna-

tion upon this point; but let the guilty observe, consider, then "go and sin no more." Why should we one day clear the garden-bed of weeds, only to scatter evil seed the next? Why wish to be seen of men "as the hypocrites" do, and only receive the hypocrite's reward? The world is watching, and can usually discern the spirit in which a deed of kindness is performed; and if self-praise is invited, they possibly may respect our wishes and bestow the favor, but will turn with contempt from the beggarly motive, and conclude that if this is religion they will do without it. Such a spirit cannot live in the soul of him who walks with God and loves Him with his whole heart. The Word, with its commands, is too sacred unto him for that, and he remembers the injunction, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand

know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.”*

The spirit of boastfulness, often standing out so prominently among those whose sacred labors should be constrained alone by the love of Christ, is no small source of pain to all devoted followers, and should be guarded against with tireless vigilance, for it is opposed to the mind which was in Christ. Charity “seeketh not her own.”

Grievances and perplexities also furnish further opportunity for the practical working of the spirit now so happily abiding in the child of God. If these did not exist to test the mettle of the Christian, how easily might he pass through a lifetime of unruffled serenity, and congratulate himself at its close for his steadfastness and unwavering fidelity, in happy ignorance of dispositions which only lacked opportunity to give him untold mortification and sorrow! But they *do* exist, as thousands who have been routed by them are well prepared to testify; and after years of service they

*Matt. vi. 1-4.

still are frequently overcome by trifles such as should possess no power to move believers of long experience; and they exclaim in disappointment, "Is it possible that after such extended training in the school of Christ, I am no further advanced than to yield to provocations like these, which at this late day should be unable to move me?" More of the Master's spirit is necessary, for they are not strong enough to overcome their tendencies to impatience, which can only be subdued by charity that "suffereth long." But let no one murmur because of perplexities, for they cannot injure those who are living as they ought. Though so many are worsted by them, it should not be so. God's grace is sufficient for the most aggravating annoyances, which, when mastered in the spirit of sweetness, but increase the Christian's vigor, and furnish discipline for times of emergency yet to come.

Many seem to require special treatment and care in order to maintain even a reasonable degree of spiritual life; and if just such conditions are not provided, they begin to droop and lose courage. Others will thrive anywhere—you cannot discourage them, you cannot read-

ily offend them; but under the most unfavorable circumstances they grow stronger and better, convincing all who behold that the grace of God is not dependent upon surroundings, but will flourish wherever the soul permits it. The growth of these two classes of Christians suggests to my mind that of two plants under the conditions I shall name. The first is delicate and colorless, of which the tenderest care must be taken, as it grows rank and brittle while enveloped in the warm temperature of the cellar. It must be handled carefully, it must be patiently tended; the frost must not reach it or it will die; the sun must not scorch it or it will wither; yet after all this care what does it amount to? The other plant is the hardy vine which entwines itself about veranda, arch, and terrace, regardless of the chilly blasts of opening Spring. Cut it down, and it will grow again; give it the most meagre chance, and it will develop, clothing the home with beauty and gladdening the hearts of all who behold. One would think that it gloried in the efforts of unkind hands to tear it down, when its determination to spring up again, notwithstanding them, is considered. If condi-

tions are favorable it will grow; if otherwise, it will grow anyway.

Thus it is with Christians. Some have but little heart-knowledge of religion, though years of experience should have thoroughly established them; and they must be coaxed, petted, nursed, and handled cautiously lest they take injury, or, possibly, lose their religion altogether. They are morbidly sensitive, easily offended, quick to observe and take to heart slights, which, perhaps, were unintentionally given. A breath of enthusiasm is too much for them, and great care must be taken to keep them alive at all. Different far is the experience of him who has thrown his whole being into this theme of practical Christianity; who depends not on the preacher but on the preacher's God; not on the church but upon Him without whom the church would be a solemn mockery. This man will grow anywhere and under any circumstances. If his lot is cast among a harmonious people where there is sufficient spiritual power to help the weakly ones over their grievances, that they wander not altogether astray, notwithstanding the "crooked paths" of which they speak so gloomily, he will be seen bearing the

heaviest burdens, striking the most telling blows for truth, laboring incessantly for the God and the cause he loves. But if, on the contrary, religion is at the lowest ebb, if laborers are few, and "Zion languishes," he will not be found slumbering with the idle ones, but will hope on, pray on, toil on; and if no one else feels called upon to awaken a religious sentiment, he will do it. If opposed, insulted, abused, he will not yield his principle for an hour's retaliation but will answer sweetly, for he has the mind of Christ, and has learned to be "patient in tribulation;" for charity "endureth all things;" and a power will attend his labors which is the most convincing argument in favor of the position he occupies. It comes directly from Christ, for it is a characteristic of Himself. How mightily did He stir this world! By a word the dead were raised, blind eyes were opened, the sick healed, the hungry fed, and other miracles too numerous here to name were performed. And His beloved, living in constant communion with the Master, and thereby gathering strength for Christian duty, also becomes a power for good in his generation. Not, perhaps, in performing such miracles as restoring the sight or

raising the dead, but what saith Christ? "Greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." If eyes blinded but for a few years are not made to see, darkened *souls* are led to everlasting light. Although bodies now returning unto dust to await the call they cannot disobey when the graves "shall yield up their dead" are not now quickened into life, immortal souls "dead in trespasses and sins" are brought to Him who saith, "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And who would not prefer to lead a deathless spirit to the life that is to bloom forever, free from the sorrows of earth, than to restore from the dead a corruptible body to endure again such suffering as brought it to the tomb? And this is the power given unto them who walk with God. They have the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and sinners are irresistibly drawn to listen to the words they speak, and, pierced with conviction, enquire, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

As the disciples, before the day of Pentecost, helpless, timid and doubtful, forsaking the Master and otherwise grieving Him, were, after that, a dauntless band ready to confess

Him anywhere, and count even death for Him a pleasure, so they who to-day enter into possession of the same power, though once weaker than a bruised reed, will become so mighty for truth and God that men shall be convinced, and acknowledge the grace they are unable to understand. And this is the great need of the age—the baptism of power from above, which constrains men to enlist their all for Christ, to press to the fore-ranks, and by which they will not, *can* not remain content without witnessing the accomplishment of aggressive work for Him; to have talents, education and judgment consecrated to God with no reserve. What reformations would we see if Christians would “put on the whole armor of God,” and if the power now in existence were employed in the proper direction? Oppression and every evil work would receive stunning rebuke, and this world would be taken for Christ in less time than we now imagine.

Now, while he who has thus received the baptism of the Holy Spirit would rejoice to see all Christians thus employed, he wastes no time in grumbling because they are not, but lives and labors with the determination that *he*

shall be, knowing that “to his own Master he standeth or falleth;” and the fact that others are negligent but acts as an incitement to more faithful diligence. He is not easily disheartened, for he has learned that discouragement is the slough in which thousands have been mired, to escape only with their lives; and while he is out of it he proposes to *keep out*, being “not ignorant” of Satan’s devices.

What can any man do while discouragement unnerves his arm and withers his heart? and what right has any Christian to be discouraged? He has God, he has eternal life, the promise of what will be best for him here, the assurance that God will “never leave him,” that He loves him, that “all things” necessary “shall be added” unto him, and that when he is through with earth, God will take him home to dwell with Him forever. Is not this enough? Would it be right for him to rummage over the blessings heaped so high on every side that he can neither count nor handle them, and having found some little thing that pains him, bring it to the front, place it by itself, then walk about it, gaze upon it until he fancies that it out-

weighs all the favors he ever received, that it will one day crush him, and that there is no use trying any longer, but he must give up? Such conduct would be a reflection upon God, an indication of limited faith, and a love far too faint for one who has received so many favors at His hands. The better way, and the way adopted by him who is wholly God's own, is to ponder the joys that come to bless his life, and when convinced that they more than balance the seeming ills, remember that these are not by any means *all* that he is to receive, but simply the little added blessings:—that he is to have heaven and God with delights which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,” and so he looks away from things that are seen to those which are to afford eternal pleasures.

A pilgrim in a strange land cannot always so control circumstances as to command the comfort he might wish, but by his journeys may nevertheless learn many useful lessons; and the inconveniences suffered, the trials endured, the weariness and loneliness often attending him but add sweetness to the thought of rest at home when his wanderings are ended, and he

greets again the loved ones whose absence was his greatest source of pain. God's children are but pilgrims upon earth, and should they be dissatisfied to fare as such? They are going home by and by, then they will have abundant time for rest; and since each step they take but shortens the intervening distance, what matters it though it be taken with more or less of weariness? Shall they say, "There is no use, we are unable to go further, we will give up the thought of heaven and home because the way is so rough that we cannot endure the pain?" Not so; but with deathless hope and ever-strengthening desire for the "better country" their resolve is to have heaven at *any* cost. Though with aching hearts, tired feet, tearful eyes and wearied minds they journey, let no one becloud their hope, for they *must have* heaven; they are *going* to have it, come what will; and when nature's enfeebled energies refuse longer to sustain them, by a direct pathway they are brought up to the pearly gates, and enter the city of God. What shouts of victory! What expressed gratitude for God's sufficient grace, which kept them from discouragement, shall then prolong the chorus, as, with the redeemed,

they sing the “new song!” Sin, trial, pain, embarrassment, with the jealousies, slanders and hatred of the scornful all left behind! How much better than to run well for a season, then yield to discouragement, vainly seek a pleasanter path, and finally enter upon eternity with a shadow of uncertainty to dim the spiritual vision. Let no Christian be discouraged, for this gives the advantage to the enemy. There is a bright side, always. Look upon it, for thus shall you strengthen your own purpose to succeed. Form this habit; for, as all others, it will grow; and you will be happier, your influence better, and your usefulness far more extended by doing so.

But he who walks with God requires no exhortation here. He *does* look upon the bright side, for his heart is young and happy though hoary locks and trembling limbs tell that the journey is almost over; that a few more burdens borne for others, a few more victories won for Christ, a little more self-mastery, and then will come rest eternal! Sunshine, which almost chases away the wrinkles from his brow, illuminates the serene old face, and his testimony convinces all who

listen that fadeless youth is already blossoming. His last days are his best. Temptations are now more readily overcome than formerly, for long-continued watchfulness, still practiced by the faithful one, baffles such attacks as the enemy, so repeatedly defeated, fails not even now to offer. He has learned the secret of victory both in temptation and in trouble; and though the surface of his being may show signs of agitation as one after another of earth's strongest ties are severed, in its peaceful depths dwells a tranquillity which remains undisturbed. These things do not injure him as they do the one whose rebellious soul demands a reason, refusing to be comforted, but they subdue his spirit, and, bowing beneath the chastening rod he cheerfully resigns himself to what for the present seems not to be joyous but grievous, to reap afterwards the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Ask such a servant of God how afflictions affect him! He will tell you that they touch Christ, who shares the burden, ere they reach him. He will say that as Christ abides with him during hours of joy, He is present also in times of deepest pain. That he beholds Christ

in the disappointments of life, and is made "more than conqueror." He sees Him in his sorrows and becomes victorious; the "form of the fourth, like the Son of God," moves with him everywhere, and dispels all fear of the fiery furnace, which is bereft of power to injure. Christ, with him, is the beginning; and the end is Christ. He is lifted to a spiritual altitude so far above the annoyances of every-day life that they appear of trivial import. His "conversation is in heaven;" and prayer becomes so natural and easy that much time is passed in communion with God. Acknowledging God's love to him, he, in return, has given all in his possession. He has confessed all wrong, forsaken all, and claims all that God has promised, as his own; his language is *Jesus only*; for in Him he ever finds a satisfying portion; and such glory thrills his soul that tears of joy add eloquence and fervor to the words which could not tell the bliss of walking with God.

Oh, ye who languish in the way, why permit the golden moments of life to pass without drawing nearer to your God? There is a future radiant with glory for those who will "awake to righteousness" and claim for themselves the

gospel privileges of the faithful. Dwell not upon the failures of the past; what are they but the strongest reasons for more loving obedience in the future? Let the memory of them lead you to see and realize your greatest need, and then seek its supply, for it is provided. You should not remain longer without it, nor will you if with honest hearts you come at once, for "God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

CHAPTER XIII.

GRACE SUFFICIENT.

Time and faithful attention devoted to any subject will always produce results which speak for themselves. The apprentice who first entered the work-shop after determining to acquire the knowledge of a trade, but was confronted by numerous perplexities and exposed to the smiles of those more skilled than he, as he, from lack of knowledge, destroyed material, bruised his hands, wearied his frame, yet accomplished but little, soon begins to overcome his awkwardness, and, finally, by assiduous application, becomes "a workman that needeth not be ashamed."

When the verdant youth presented himself for the first time at the college doors, he was even too innocent to suppose that those who gave him welcome with pleasant smiles and avowals of friendship, were capable of subjecting him to the pain and discomfort of hazing. His movements and expressions displayed few

marks of culture, and far more knowledge of rustic life than of the classics. But through the constant influence of refined and cultured instructors and the better class of students, his uncouth manners, which were so mortifying to him, become changed for others which are more agreeable, and which characterize those whom he considers to be models of good behavior. Time goes on until even sophomoric dignity has been attained and passed, and, by-and-by, graduation honors are conferred upon him. Thus it is, that, by associating with the cultured and refined, he has become so himself; and the results of his wise decision to secure an education cannot be hidden. They are manifest in well-chosen language, in his reading, writing, conduct, manners and everything.

Moses, after talking with God upon Mount Sinai, was obliged to veil his face that the people might not be dazzled by the radiant glory with which it was illumined, for his face shone so that they could not look upon it. And will not believers who walk with God to-day, living in communion with Him, learning of Him constantly, and reducing to practice the instruction

of the Father, become so influenced, strengthened and transformed as to exhibit uncommon radiance and power among men? Will not this "more excellent way" of living display tangible results? Nothing can be more certain than this. And now, after having portrayed the life of faith and of love to God, we desire to spend a little time in observing some of the characteristics seen in those who have *truly* entered into this intimate and blessed relationship with Him. We can notice but a few; yet all that will be needed to express an idea of the advantages conferred upon those who determine that they will not retain their habits of transgressing, but will "lose their (sinful) lives" for Christ's sake; and I trust a sufficient number to enkindle within some sin-weary soul yearnings for the "rest of faith."

Victory amid opposing forces deserves our attention in noting the life of him who proves the sufficiency of divine grace. We say "opposing forces," for though the believer is now liberated from oppression, he is still in the world, and must accept his share of its grievances in common with his fellow-men. Possibly more are presented than might naturally

be expected, for he has dared to declare himself an avowed enemy of wrong, and steps to the front in the battle for truth and righteousness. He is subjected to the hottest of the enemy's fire. This man is to accomplish more toward arresting the progress of iniquity than a score of his more fearful brethren who live on carelessly year after year, but are not aggressive. Satan is not ignorant of the fact, and, naturally enough, singles him out as the special object of his wrath. He hurls at him his most deadly missiles, in his determination to destroy him. Temptations of the severest description are repeatedly presented, and the minutest avenues of the soul are searched, if, haply, they may be found unguarded, and an entrance be gained. But Satan discovers, to his chagrin, that all are closed and barred against him; that an impenetrable barrier surrounds God's beloved who refuses to listen to the tempter. His sharp and fiery darts are repelled as the shot and shell that glance from the sides of an ironclad vessel, while the Christian, meantime, rejoicing in God's delivering grace, renews his vigor and stands ready to give battle to the lurking foe.

Troubles of the keenest nature often assail the soul. They surprise, astonish, almost bewilder him, for he was not expecting anything of that kind. As an unlooked-for hailstorm, as an avalanche, as a resistless freshet, they bear down upon him until it would seem that he must be destroyed. But not so! He is prepared for them; and with the calm strength of ever-growing confidence in the Mighty to Save, he meets and overcomes them. His love for God remains unchanged, and well he knows that God means not to torture him; so with the assurance that beyond his understanding lies a reason for the ordeal, he accepts, with thankful spirit, what must, in some unknown way, work out his greatest good. Shall his faith fail now, just at the point where God desires to prove its loyalty? Shall his love depart because a cloud of sorrow, strange and dark, has settled down upon him? Ah! it is now that he has the most imperative need of it, and now that it is most serviceable. Looking still to God, his prayer ascends—"Oh, God! I do not understand, but only know that Thou art love. I see no reason, I need none. Thy reason is a good one, I trust Thee still. Send what is best,

only give Thyself. Let my soul be purified at any cost, even though the furnace be required. Teach me such lessons as I have need to know, for I am anxious to learn them all. The trial is not unnecessary, for Thou dost not 'willingly afflict.' It will not be too severe. It cannot overcome me, for Thou hast said Thy 'grace is sufficient' for me. I believe it; I trust that grace. Let me then patiently endure, for I know that when Thou seest it is enough, Thou wilt relieve." Will God withhold acknowledgment of this confidence? Never! And will trouble prove an injury to one who thus hides himself in God? It will but assist him in pressing nearer to the Divine. The tempest is in his favor, and speeds him heavenward, while those who know but little of God's love are dazed, only coming forth victorious after long and weary conflict, in which they are menaced with defeat at every turn.

Two vessels are laboring in the same storm upon the same troubled waters; the one beating against the tempest, and the other running before it with wind and waves in her favor. How different are the effects of this storm upon these respective vessels. The effect upon the

former is neither agreeable nor satisfactory. She struggles on, mounting the billow's crest at one time, then burying her prow as the receding wave leaves a deep valley in which she is almost hidden from view; then up again, the spray dashing against the bows, rising far above the bulwarks, then falling in torrents, drenching everything that is not under cover; and, notwithstanding the labor is so heavy, the progress made against the storm and toward the port of destination is very small indeed, for wind and waves beat in the opposite direction.

The other vessel, running before the storm, has a different kind of voyage altogether. Away she speeds, with canvas like outspread wings extended to invite the assistance of the gale. True, there is much tossing and rolling to the vessel as she is rocked by the resistless billows, but it is an easy motion, and every gust of wind, and every wave that does its worst to sink the ship but assists in wafting the victorious vessel toward the port of rest.

And I have thought that similar are the effects of the same tempest of trouble upon different voyagers on the sea of life. One of

these living at such a distance from his God that burdens and afflictions readily disturb; the other so near that "in all these things he is more than conqueror." In the first case, Christian duty is not as agreeable as it should be, for the storms of life are severe enough to imbitter the voyage; and after all his suffering, the progress heavenward is scarcely perceptible. But in the second case, it is different. He reasons thus: Since "all things work together for good," *this storm must*; and as I am in it, I mean to make the best of it. His course is laid, the canvas unfurled, the fastenings which held him to the earthly are cut loose, and away he skims over the restless waters of "light affliction, which is but for a moment," and which is to work for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

A happy independence which fills the heart with joy and the lips with praise, forms a characteristic of him who walks with God. Matters are not as they once were with him. Memory takes him back to the time when he was troubled about many things which lack power to reach him now, for he has risen above

them. He has learned in whatever state he is, "therewith to be content;" to accept his position and be thankful. The time was when he could not do this, but met misfortune with impatience, anger or indifference. To-day he meets it with *resignation*; which implies the difference between the spirit of the stoic who could witness the approach of the inevitable with a grim, deliberate coldness, and declare his fearlessness of meeting the doom awaiting him, and the cheerful willingness expressed in the words of Paul, who, upon receiving the intelligence that the worst that man could inflict was to befall him, exclaimed, in the calm spirit so prominent throughout his life, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." No vain regrets are his, no rebellion because of gloomy prospects, but a restful, happy readiness to accept whatever is to come, knowing that he still is in the hands of God,

and not of men who simply become instruments of furthering his highest interest.

Such independence, which only the grace of God can give, is ever prominent in the life of him who permits God to have his own way; and it is exhibited among the ordinary activities of life. Men sometimes hold convictions of right and truth, but scarcely dare express them lest the reflection of public sentiment cripple their popularity or affect their reputation. But no such fear binds the hands or closes the lips of him who walks with God; for God does not thus teach his children. This man will declare the truth whether reputation suffers or not; whether public opinion smiles or frowns; whether friends or enemies are gained; whether his business is benefited or injured; his treasury filled or emptied. He must speak. He cannot do otherwise, for he lives to please God, not man; to glorify his Father, not to gratify listeners whose feelings are, perhaps, more tender than their consciences. And he will and does speak, while God cares for the results. Nor does this imply the severe, imprudent and unnecessary use of the tongue which many suppose themselves

called to make, yet which results only in stirring the indignation of men without conferring any possible good; but, instead, a wise and thoughtful rebuke of wrong, whether beheld in Christians or others.

Many who should be as fearless in denouncing evil as the sunbeam is in searching out the darkened corners of the earth, are held in check because they fear the rebounding influence of their words against themselves. Such a spirit has even been known to reduce the usefulness of Christian instructors. More sufferance has sometimes been shown toward inconsistent brethren of prominent social standing or large financial ability, than to others no more culpable, but who were of lowly position and poor, and did not wield such influence or power as could reflect unfavorably if employed. But should not evil be rebuked as faithfully in men of power as in those whose retaliation, if made, could work no material discomfort? There should be no fear in the hearts of God's ambassadors save that of displeasing Him; no apprehension that God will refuse to support His faithful ones, and they be left to suffer—and, indeed, it would be better to suffer, if

necessary, than to leave duty unperformed. But God will care for those who fearlessly confide in Him, so that no disquietude is necessary. More will always be lost from spiritual power than can possibly be gained pecuniarily, by only measurably rebuking sin where well-founded convictions justify nothing but the plainest speech. The minister of Christ whose undivided heart seeks only the glory of God, will not be tempted to unfaithfulness by such fear. He is a free man. He is God's man, and God does not forget him. He lives, labors, sacrifices for God, and God is his defense. God shelters him, protects him, and so long as heaven and earth belong to God, he need have no uneasiness; and so he is content; and if, by any possibility, the Heavenly Father should become so impoverished as to be absolutely unable to supply his child's necessities, that child, with still faithful love and self-denial would consider it his delight to share the poverty of his Father, who freely gave while He was able. But so long as God possesses all things, there can be no danger of want to him who fully trusts His power and willingness to supply. Our "Heavenly Father knoweth that

we have need of all these things." What is needed will come *somewhere*, for God is true; and if there seems to be an unusual scarcity, the very fact, if it can do nothing more, will at least furnish opportunity for faith to soar and overcome. A good theory, you say; truth: but the practice is far better. Oh, for a steadfast faith in God!

Yet He will encourage neither extravagance nor idleness in *any* man. While there are deserving poor whose claim upon our charity none are disposed to deny, much of what passes for poverty is only mismanagement—an unnecessary expenditure of what, if wisely used, would be sufficient. Many appear to have no idea for what money is given, nor how to use it. They squander it as soon as it is obtained, and are always poor—probably always will be. Others are proud and presumptuous, and work is something to which they will not condescend. Now, with a word of advice to such unfortunates as these, we will return from this digression. To the first, Christ's command to "gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost," might teach such a lesson of economy, if wisely considered, as would

awaken the assurance of happier days, and invite the smile of fortune. The second might be profited by remembering that "God is no respecter of persons," and that he was not to be excepted when God declared, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," and that "if any would not work neither should he eat." There is a harmony in the conjoined life of faith and works which cannot be broken without producing discord. But he who truly walks with God so marks the necessity of living this two-fold life that the danger of inconsistency therein is readily perceived wherever it exists; and it is no sooner detected than avoided.

Freedom from uneasiness regarding the future contributes generously toward the joys of him who daily proves the sufficient grace of God. People can usually endure the trials of the day, but the superadded burden of prospective trouble is too much for them. Yet these unnecessary burdens borne form no small proportion of the aggregate. But the promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," does not presuppose that we encumber ourselves with the weight of future trials; it

rather consoles us with the assurance that, if faithful, we shall be enabled to master simply the difficulties of each day as they appear, without uneasiness for what is further on. Most any one might be crushed if compelled to suffer from expectation of the possible results which looked-for trial may produce. If we were certain that next month our entire possessions were to be destroyed, that the month following many of our dearest friends would be stricken in death, that still later the few remaining would turn to be our enemies, and that in consequence of these afflictions health would fail and life become a burden, the depression of our spirits would be such that the present, also, would be almost unendurable. But we know nothing of the kind, however dark *this* day may be; nor have we permission to worry. God is love to-day, and enables us to endure; He will be the same to-morrow, and will give strength for the burdens of to-morrow.

Do any of us suppose that God will leave us in trial to which our strength is positively unequal, and thus permit us to be crushed beneath its weight, when He has a thousand ways by which He is able to deliver? If so,

we are distrustful, and will do well to bow at once in tearful penitence before God, confess our littleness of faith, and implore that grace which is ready for all who will become possessors of it. The thought is scarcely conceivable to the obedient child who loves with all his power, and walks by faith alone. Some change of conditions will come before his strength has failed. Some rift in the storm-cloud will let the sunbeam through. Relief, coming, it may be, from the most unexpected quarter, will change his faith to sight, and he will be convinced that God was guiding all the while, though it seemed that he was left to suffer alone. And when the test is over, and the Christian, true and tried, is made to understand the meaning of such mysterious treatment, in the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," he will gladly confess that God knew better than he. I have beheld Christians whose faith in the midst of mighty conflict was truly sublime. While under a pressure so terrific that it seemed they must succumb, they held fast; they regarded the trial with comparative indifference. They smiled at it; they seemed to say, "Do your worst, our souls are immovable. You

cannot disturb us! God reigns; we trust Him; and He will give us victory." And victory came. Then when I compared my own faith, and saw its littleness, my sorrow was stirred, and my prayer to God arose, "Teach me this lesson also! Let me serve as these. If trial be most necessary, or sorrow, or disappointment, I am willing they should come, but let me love and trust as these."

There is such a thing as living without afflicting ourselves with more actual burdens than God desires we should carry; and if we assume those only which He imposes, we never shall be the worse for burden-bearing. While sharing those of others, obedient to His mandate, His mighty arm around us, shall preserve us from all harm. The future, to him who lives aright, is radiant with hope and joy, rather than overcast at the prospect of enduring trial which possibly may prove too great, and crush him. Nothing can reach him without God's notice or permission, and he believes God is able to sustain him under any trial, and that He will do so, too, or else deliver him by its removal. And this is enough for him. With this he is content. Then, casting his eye for-

ward, where, looming before his spiritual vision, just beyond these present things, he beholds the city of his God toward which his wearied feet are tending, as he sees other faithful ones who patiently endured life's keenest suffering, laying aside the mantle of earth, well worn and dusty, and receiving the crown and robe of everlasting life, resplendent in the fadeless beauty of the better world, he forgets his weariness in the glorious hope of immortality. The veil seems for the time withdrawn. His eye can almost distinguish the familiar forms now invigorated to die no more. His ear seems to catch the music of the redeemed host he is soon to join: he is "in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better;" yet is content to stay.

CHAPTER XIV.

REST.

The benediction of undisturbed rest is the only addition we will here make to this incomplete catalogue of privileges enjoyed by those who live in daily possession of God's sufficient grace: a blessing sought and eulogized wherever man is known, but experienced by a surprisingly small fraction of the race. Every one craves rest. Careworn souls, turning away from the vision of weary years of trial and bereavement to friends upon whom sorrows press but lightly, wonder at the beauties life seems to hold for them, and ask the secret of their peacefulness, enquiring where this rest is to be found. Disappointed hearts, returning from the futile chase for joys which kept so near, but just beyond their reach, tantalizing, beguiling, inviting, yet receding faster than the swiftest feet could follow, come, breathless and panting, ready at last to relinquish the long-

continued pursuit, and, drooping with weariness, imploringly ask for rest. Beautiful home-circles, long unbroken by the ravages of the destroyer, and all the more perfect by the firmness of affection's cords, grown to be so mature, must be broken now. The cords must be parted, and all the attendant pain endured. Hearts must bleed, tears must flow. And now, the bereaved, sighing for an hour of forgetfulness, in which they may recruit their vigor, looking away from this, the keenest sorrow they have known, with swollen eyes and with sobs that melt the sternest heart, appeal to our sympathies and ask, "Can you not tell us where we may find rest?"

But this call for relief is not the most importunate. Following the bier is a sympathizing friend: a mother upon whose brow the lines of suffering are deeply drawn. At the grave's mouth she stands with the bereaved who are so confident that they have tasted of life's keenest sorrow. But in that stricken face the experienced eye can read a tale of grief heavier far than tearful eyes can tell. In silence she looks upon the scene, but does not weep. Ah! if she could, her sufferings would be eased, but

she cannot. She beholds almost with envy their favored lot: at least, with gratitude in their behalf, that their deepest anguish brings tears of relief, and is so much lighter than her own. This mother has a wayward boy; an only son, around whom her fondest hope had twined. But in youth's slippery paths he fell. Regardless of her warning and instruction, he "walked in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes;" and now he is obliged to suffer the consequences of his iniquity. Sin has destroyed him. It has ruined his health, blackened his character, blasted his hope, and shattered him beyond recovery. He still exists, but is a wreck in mind and body, without a hope of any good beyond. And as this mother stands by the grave of innocence, witnesses the fountain-flow of tears, and with its loving ones takes a farewell look at the marble face, with a bursting heart at the remembrance of what is worse, a hundred-fold, than death, the involuntary whisper escapes her lips—"Would that my own loved one had thus been buried ere sin had worked his ruin." And as she turns away to lift again the intolerable burden, we meet the same haggard, almost despair-

ing look, which asks with deeper emphasis than words can give, "Do you think that there is rest for me?"

All classes are in search of rest. The cry for it reverberates upon a thousand hill-tops and echoes along the fertile valleys of the earth. It comes to us from the north; the south also is calling for rest. They seek it in the east, nor is the west satisfied without it. Millionaires have everything beside it; the penniless desire it above the bread they crave. Health cannot satisfy without it; with it, sickness is powerless to disturb. Ease becomes wearisome if rest of soul be absent; its presence makes the heaviest burdens light. Without it, we sigh; but this soul-rest turns our sighing into singing. Bitter tears flow where it does not abide; but with rest, tears lose their bitterness. What price is too dear to pay for rest of soul? Cheerfully will they endure hardness for a season, if but the assurance of its coming attend the labors of its famished seekers. They will work till hands are brown and callous from their toil; till brains are weary, eyes are dim, and limbs grow feeble. They will deny themselves the comfort of the pres-

ent, modify arrangements for the future, to prepare for its enjoyment, and engage every power, to the end that this priceless boon be made their own.

Yet while it stands knocking at their very doors they will not take it! While it sits awaiting entertainment, they turn away as if it were an intruder upon their time! While it offers itself saying, "I will confer enduring comfort," they refuse, as if because so readily obtained it could not be worth the taking. They would work for it, yet seem unwilling to accept it as a gift. But oh, wearied one, have you not labored long enough to no account? Have you not yet borne enough? Have you not suffered enough, sighed, wept, sought, agonized and called? Have you not already spent too much time and means without avail, conscious, after all this anxiety, of the same hungering, thirsting, aching heart? Have you not experimented until convinced that such is not the means by which the pearl may be discovered? Have you not tried all that reason bids you venture? Alas 'tis true! but your soul is burdened still. Now cease your random search and embrace the blessing just outside your

heart. Rest is there! Rest for you. Rest now. Rest forever. The grace of God includes it, and comes to you laden with its sweetness. Walk with God, and it shall be yours this day and evermore! "Come unto me," said Christ, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That means *you* if you are burdened. Surely you do not doubt it! You would not say that because your burdens are peculiar, and unaccountably afflicting, that therefore Christ is unable to fulfill His word? Then he *must* mean you just as you are; and the heavier the burden the greater is your need of relief. It signifies nothing whether the burden be great or small. He can bear it in either case. Therefore, bring it to Him, and having done so, *leave* it with Him. You must do it; the privilege is too great to be neglected. Christ loves you and would not see you burdened thus. He commands you to do it, and if you love Him you will obey. Having "come" to Christ, having "taken" His "yoke," and "learned" of Him, the unqualified promise is, you "*shall* find rest." Now, if you do not find rest it will be because of some reserve; for the promise stands unchanged. Rest is always

given when the conditions are fully met. Then plead no excuse; your case is not an exceptional one. You shall have rest if you will accept it. Then *do* so and "go in peace."

The cause of unrest among believers is not the excessive weight of burdens, not the severity of trial, for often the fully consecrated, who enjoy the sweetest rest, are they whose material surroundings are of the most distressing character, subjecting them to sorrows calculated to harrow beyond expression; yet they ride on victoriously, while others with far less reason for complaint are disturbed much of the time. The cause lies within themselves; and consists in what has been portrayed throughout previous chapters of this book; namely, a partial reception, only, of the grace which would drive forever from their lives such inconsistencies as are often deplored in penitence and sorrow. Neither victory nor rest shall ever gladden our hearts by the simple absence of the ills of life, but rather through divine strength being brought to our assistance. And this can only be done by the concurrence of our wills; including, and, indeed, necessitating an unreserved surrender to God. Oh, if this

work be accomplished, what mighty results will follow! It will be as natural for us to rest in God as it is for us to breathe. Soul-rest will be ours continually, and effective labor for God the outward expression. As the child, timid, fearful, unwilling to venture, when alone, becomes wonderfully brave when conscious of his father's presence, so we, though formerly helpless, will, by the abiding presence of our God, venture anything, everything, so long as it be in the defense of truth and in obedience to the Father who has promised to protect us.

And what shall be able to disturb us while God's strength is still our own? Shall it be the remembrance of weary years of trouble? Shall it be a death-bed scene? Shall it be painful memories of loved ones who have failed, and thus mortified or grieved us? I tell you it will not be found in these things to molest the repose abiding in our hearts. While the surface may sometimes show agitation, the peaceful currents of the soul will move on toward the boundless ocean of God Himself, from whence came this wondrous grace; then the tide of His love will come, overwhelming the little

disappointments of an hour, drowning our sorrows, stilling in eternal death our murmurings, washing away the stains our sins had left, and thrilling with a heavenly joy our souls, as, standing in bewilderment, we demand, with the astonished Paul, whose words were unequal to his rapture, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

CHAPTER XV.

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CONCLUSION.

If tears wrung from our griefs may water the flowers which shall bring smiles to saddened faces, as, wandering long upon a joyless pathway, wearied ones seek fadeless pleasures, shall we not willingly weep?

If the toil of hands now well used to work, and the journeys of feet not easily fatigued may provide rest for feeble ones who would gladly labor, but for weakness of the flesh, shall we refuse the comfort we thus may purchase for them?

If trials which cannot injure, but only strengthen when faithfully endured, may open to us fields of usefulness, and enable us to clear away the boulders against which others might otherwise be bruised and crippled, shall we shrink from facing them like men?

If dangers encountered in the turbulent channel whose waters murmur the death-knell

of many who have been overwhelmed (but rendered harmless to us through a loving Providence which turned them to good account), may enable us more emphatically to ring out to others the warning cry, shall we waste time in shuddering at the thought of what might have been, while others, ignorant of the treachery these waters conceal, are floating down the current and approaching certain death? Shall we not rather lift up our voices, and "cry aloud" and "spare not," that they may be checked before it is too late?

A few years since, I dreamed that I was floating in a light canoe upon a lake. It will be impossible to describe the beauty of the surroundings, though everything is painted indelibly upon my memory. The lake was large and like a sea of crystal. Not a breath of wind ruffled its placid bosom, which spread for miles before me. The banks were picturesque, and fringed the lake with a border of living verdure, reflected to perfection in the glassy water. At some points they rose almost abruptly; then the picture was relieved by a long, gradual ascent which merged into a mass of luxuriant foliage.

My boat was but a few rods from the shore, and as I sat there, holding the paddle with both hands, it seemed that no position could be pleasanter or safer than the one I held. Boating had been my favorite amusement, almost from infancy, and I flattered myself that I possessed some skill in that pastime; yet did not suppose that even the most inexperienced person could find anything to fear in a situation such as was mine. Still, I felt strangely solemn. I knew not why, but I was sad. I felt very much as one does while attending the funeral services of some dear friend, and as though it would require but little to start the tears.

My sister walked on the beach, near by, and was singing a familiar tune in which I might have taken part. But I did not join her this time. I felt too solemn to sing, yet appreciated the music, which was attended by the peculiar charm that the stillness of the air beside an expanse of water always lends. Now and then I would look off to where she stood, and though conscious of no fear, felt a strange uneasiness creeping over me, which increased my sadness, and caused me to almost envy her

position: Thus we spent some time; my sister singing, while I floated on, occasionally casting a wistful glance to the beach, which appeared so smooth and safe. After a while I detected a slight current in the water, but the only perceptible difference it made with me was that propelling the boat required still less exertion. Happening to look up, I saw an outlet to the lake some distance before me. It was very narrow, not wide enough to be dangerous, I thought, and my curiosity was aroused to explore. Grasping the paddle with firmer hand, I guided the boat, which now moved on as rapidly as desirable without my assistance. And now I was close to the opening. It seemed that it was not more than a few rods in width. The water just here was charming. The flow was so uniform that not a ripple could be seen. I could even look over the rapids, and see quite a distance beyond. There was no abrupt fall to the water, but it moved grandly over a slightly inclined plane without a noticeable break. No jutting rocks nor fallen trees could here be seen to disturb the surface, but noiselessly, sublimely, it moved on. "Here is an opportunity," thought I, "to exer-

cise my skill. The water is so smooth, the descent so gradual, there can be no possible danger in floating over the falls. I will try it anyway." And so I did. Bracing myself in proper attitude, I pointed the boat's prow toward the center of the rapids, and over I shot as an arrow! I cannot describe my feelings at that thrilling moment, nor the thoughts that flashed through my mind. But after darting down, *down*, I knew not where, as quick as thought my boat was stopped! It had become wedged in the crevice of a protruding rock which could not be seen from the top of the opening, and there for a moment I trembled. A resistless flood behind, certain death before! And now the water commenced to foam and seethe with deafening roar. At that critical moment a tremulous voice close to my side, expressive of the most intense alarm and grief at the danger of my position, sounded above the thunder of the cataract, and increased, ten-fold, my terror by the words: "*Take c-a-r-e!* *Take c-A-R-E!*" and with a shudder I awoke. But the tears which would fall in spite of me, told how deep an impression had been made. It can never be forgotten.

I have been endeavoring, myself, to "take care," and also to convince others that their own skill upon the sea of life, however great, is insufficient; that there are outlets, and rapids, and precipitous falls, into which they may be unconsciously drawn, only to meet their doom. Would to God that I might awaken you, dear reader, to the knowledge of your unseen danger (if you have followed my thought up to this page without accepting the Savior's proffered help). Would that you might be brought to realize your inability to weather the storms of life, unaided by grace divine, and realizing it, seek, without delay, the strength you need. Stronger men than either of us are gliding over the falls to their eternal destiny of woe. Oh! who will warn them of their danger? Who will extend a hand to check them? I see them upon the brink. I hear their cry as they are borne over the flood to be lost forever and ever! Upon the stream are sinners of every rank; some better, some worse; but all powerless to save themselves.

The skeptic is there, blaspheming the name of Jesus as he glides helplessly along. On, and yet on, the current bears him, till, sud-

denly, with a shriek, he is hurled into the abyss, and there is none to deliver. There floats also the careless; kind and good, as goodness is commonly accounted, but he is trifling with the treacherous waters beneath him. They are smooth and without a ripple; the rapids are far away; the motion of his canoe is just swift enough to be pleasurable: and thus he drifts on until he, also, is surprised by the opening before him, the rapidity of the current, the seething of the waters, and the din of the descending flood; and now that it is *too late*, his desperation is aroused; he struggles mightily, but as a feather he is borne onward, and over he goes, to join the lost who never, never can return!

There, too, is one who has obtained position among the children of the King; yet, carelessly conforming to the world, he floats with the ungodly toward the abyss of ruin. Now an anxious one calls loudly from the shore, enquiring, as he marvels at such recklessness, "My brother, are you safe?" Startled at such impertinence, and exhibiting the cloak of his self-righteousness, his answer echoes, "I belong to the church;" and onward he drifts with the god-

less toward his eternal destiny. Now he stands before the Judge, that he may receive his reward for "the deeds done in the body." But his cloak cannot be found! He deceived men, he deceived himself, but he cannot deceive his Maker! The blackness of his unregenerate heart cannot be concealed, and God's sentence passes—"Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Oh! reader, whatever remains neglected, make sure of salvation! Seek it! Seek it now! Seek it with all your heart, and it shall be yours! "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Reader, this is the only opportunity you can call your own! To-morrow the spirit may have departed. Next week may be too late. If you intend ever to be a Christian, commence to-day—commence *now*. Plead not your youth. If you are old enough to realize your sinfulness, you are of sufficient age to know your need of Christ. Away with the

idea that children are too young to come, while the Holy Spirit is seeking admittance to their hearts! Are not the children called? Did not Christ say, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven ?" * Whosoever would hinder one of the least of these, calls down God's displeasure. Plead not your age, for though you have sinned until your heart has become as hard as the brooklet's stony bed, remember God has promised that He would take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a " heart of flesh." † Remember the dying thief, and know that "though vile as he," Christ will wash away each sinful stain. Plead not the poverty of your soul. Ah! it was for this Christ died. " For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." ‡ Plead not your feebleness, nor suppose that because earthly hopes have faded, you must also be left without a hope of heaven. What though sickness has laid its relentless hand upon your frame, forbidding the accom-

* Matt. xix., 14. † Ezek. xi., 19. ‡ 2 Cor. viii., 9.

plishment of cherished plans? If any one in this world needs salvation, I am sure it is you; for when the avenues of earthly pleasure have thus been closed against you, life must indeed be dreary without a fair prospect of "immortality and eternal life." Has your enfeeblement disheartened you, giving you to feel that because you are unable to work as others, you therefore are of little account? Then relinquish, this hour, such a notion; for not always he who is most active pleases God the best. Who cannot labor, if health be unimpaired? Any one can; and such a person may accomplish much for God. But does he who endures the blight of disease without a murmur accomplish nothing? God does not so judge. If patiently, sweetly, lovingly, the trial is borne for Jesus' sake, the reward from your Father which is in heaven, shall be great.

What though trouble assail, coming upon you as a December's blast? Wait not till it is overpast! for the storm may be terrible and long. Get the victory in it, remembering your source of strength. Meet it manfully, forgetting not that it is written "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made

perfect in weakness." Make no plea, whatever, save that you are a sinner, that you desire to be saved, that you must be saved, that you *mean* to be saved, and that you believe Jesus Christ who "came into the world to save sinners" is able, willing, ready and anxious to save you *now*. Thus claiming Him as your own, trusting His power to deliver, you shall enter into rest.

And now another word to you, fellow-soldier in the battle for truth. I cannot tell what victories you have won in the life of love to God, or what defeats have brought you low in tears and sorrow. I do not know the dangers you encounter day by day, how slippery are the paths you tread, nor how much fortitude will be required to enable you to stand. Some positions in life are emphatically dangerous, and can only be successfully maintained by the most scrupulous caution. Yours may be so; it is not for me to say. But this much I shall affirm: that God is able to sustain you, and will do so if permitted. "Fear not, only believe;" and the reward shall confer its blessing upon your life.

Should any believer with an experience which has never been extraordinary, and who lacks faith to believe such a thing is possible, after perusing these pages, feel disposed to disbelieve and oppose, we simply have to say that until you have come and put this matter to the actual test, you are unprepared to judge; and we pray you, that for your own good as well as for the good of those under your influence, do not hinder by opposition, if you cannot assist, but first of all come and make the trial without prejudice, doubt or fear. Come as you came at first for pardon;—honestly, willingly, reasonably, cheerfully; and if, after the trial has been fairly made, you still are unconvinced, there will be ample time for opposition. Ah, when you have taken this advice, you will have no disposition to oppose; but will join the army of those who unfurl to the world the banner of the Cross, bearing the testimony to God's marvelous grace, "We love Him because He first loved us." Christian experience will then mean very much to you. Not merely a theory, good enough to furnish food for the mind, but never to be entertained when you are brought face to face with opposing elements, not a dream of

the night to be forgotten with approaching day, but it will mean a part of your very being; and as you are made to marvel at the grace given unto you, the deepest regret of your life will be that so many years of valuable time were permitted to pass without a more intimate acquaintance with the God who loved you so!

And now, kind reader, I bid you farewell, praying that your love may remain steadfast, your faith immovable, and that your record may show a long catalogue of victories won for Christ.



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